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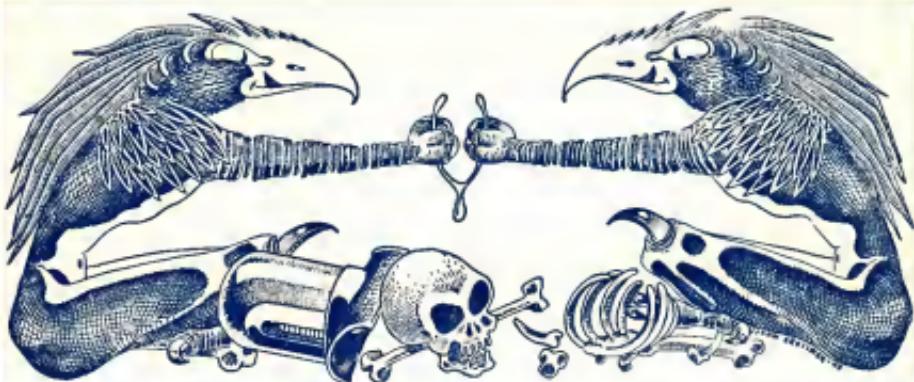
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the Editorial



WE'D like to breathe a big sigh of relief this month and at the same time tender an apology to any of our readers who may not have been quite satisfied with the appearance of the last issue.

THE sigh of relief is for overcoming the obstacles of a fire at the printing plant, managing to get the magazine produced under adverse conditions—and at the same time having a railroad strike to contend with in shipping the issue to your respective cities. We accomplished the difficult operation and **IMAGINATION** appeared on the stands in due course—a little late, and in some cases copies were not up to the high production standard we have come to expect. But you did receive the magazine!

THE apology is for those of you who received an occasional copy that was not in perfect condition. We're sorry for that, but it won't happen again. As our printer told us: "We shall always remember this issue of **IMAGINATION**."

ASIDE from this, we are quite pleased with the response you gave that issue. You liked the cover, and what's more important, you liked the stories. And of course in the

final analysis it's the stories that make a science-fiction magazine good or bad.

SPEAKING of stories, we think you'll really enjoy this issue. It's got quite a bit of variety in it, with a number of the top names in the field, and a few very talented newcomers. We'd like to get your reaction to a number of them in particular. First of all there's, **BEYOND THE FEARFUL FOREST**, by Geoff St. Reynard. For want of a better description you might call this short novel a really "sleek" yarn. To put it in Geoff's own words: "In BTFF I returned to a style of writing I've long wanted to do. I like to think it has something of the flavor of the old masters of fantasy, such as the early H. G. Wells. The one thing that backed me up as I was writing it was the stated policy of **IMAGINATION**, to wit: 'We intend that this magazine shall have but one guiding policy: quality . . . (not) formula space operas . . . Stories where some care has been taken with the writing, where the love of creation is evident in the author's work.' I took a lot of time and care with this story. And if the readers like it, what more can a writer ask for?" From an editorial standpoint, nothing more, Geoff. And incidentally, for

those of you who are not aware of it, Geoff St. Reynard is a pen-name for serious novelist, Robert W. Krepp. Bob also informed us that he's busily at work on his new novel for Rinehart. We don't mind Bob turning out serious tomes as long as he manages to keep Madge well supplied at the same time! At any rate, let us know how you like Geoff's novel in this issue.

THEN there's Richard Matheson who created quite a stir in Tony Boucher's book, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. You'll find a little shocker by Matheson in this issue. It's a bit on the grim side, and we think it's a story you won't easily forget. If you like this type of tale, let us know. It's not really science fiction—or fantasy either. It's off-trail. But whatever you choose to call it, we thought it was quite good. Care for more?

HAL Annas makes his third straight appearance in Madge this issue. And we mention his story, **THE LONGSNOZZLE EVENT** only because we want to know how you like Len Zitz—and if you'd like to see more stories featuring him in much the same style as this first. We wouldn't say the story was heavy on the plot side, but it has a satirical humor that may give you a few laughs. Be sure and let us know how you liked it.

BRADBURY of course needs no introduction. We'd just like to say that his story in this issue is being included in a new book published by Doubleday entitled, **THE ILLUSTRATED MAN**. It should be on sale at your bookstore soon. Eric Frank Russell presents his **AFTERNOON OF A FAHN** with all due respects to Debussy, whose music we love

very deeply. And in this particular case, Mr. Russell's title is a prelude to a neat little yarn. We hope you like it.

AS you will note, we've started a new feature this month, **FANDORA'S BOX**. This will be a regular department in which fans, fan clubs, and the various fanzines published all over the country will be reviewed, and discussed, along with interesting bits of information relative to the fan world. We thought you'd like to have a fan department, so we arranged with Mari Wolf to do it. (Mari is the wife of Rog Phillips, well known sf author). So any of you fans who would like to have your fanzine reviewed, or if you have something you think all science-fantasy fans would like to know, send the information to Mari Wolf, **FANDORA'S BOX**, c/o **IMAGINATION**, P.O. Box 230, Evanston, Ill. Or if you prefer, you can write to Mari direct: Mari Wolf Graham, 41-59, Bowne St., Flushing, Long Island, N.Y. (Just so you don't get confused with the last name, Rog Phillips is really Roger P. Graham in disguise. It seems that every author's pen-name is better known than his own!)!

DID you like the cover this issue? It's not a painting. It's a photo print colored with dyes. Something a bit unusual and we hope it meets with your approval. Along these lines you'll find many more new and interesting type covers on future issues. Next issue, for example, we're presenting a new Bok cover. It's a beautiful job, and Robert Bloch liked it so much he wrote the cover story. Following that issue will be a new and authentic interplanetary cover by Walter H. Hinton. And after that? Well, we'll talk about that later. Let us hear from you. . . . wh

BEYOND THE FEARFUL FOREST

By Geoff St. Reynard

No hunter had ever dared to follow the great Knifeteeth Bear into his Fearful Forest. For beyond it lay a greater peril — the land of The Nameless . . .



It would take more than one arrow to slay the huge Knifeteeth. Could he do the impossible?

BEYOND THE FEARFUL FOREST

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Na hunter had ever dared to follow the great Knifetaath Bear into his Fearful Forest. For beyond it lay a greater peril — the land of The Nameless . . .



It would take more than one arrow to slay the huge Kalfooth. Could he do the impossible?



THIS bones lie light in the fertile soil of Sunset Fields. You can prod them out with a few thrusts of your bare toes. The roots of the big luxurious tree ferns carry skulls and shins and backbones up to the frond-filtered shin-

ing of day, and even the delicately questing purple tendrils of the burrowflower may drag an occasional finger or toe bone from its uneasy rest, so light they lie.

The bones do not decay. Nobody knows why. Animal bones decay,



THE bones lie light in the fertile soil of *Sunset Fields*. You can prod them out with a few thrusts of your bare toes. The roots of the big luxuriant tree ferns carry skulls and skins and backbones up to the frond-filtered shin-

ing of day, and even the delicately questing purple tendrils of the burrowflower may drag an occasional finger or toe bone from its uneasy rest, so light they lie.

The bones do not decay. Nobody knows why. Animal bones decay.

The skeletons of our own revered dead fall away to powder in a generation or two. But the bones of Sunset Fields are like the unchanging granite of the jagged cliffs, and of them we make our arrow points and lance heads, our hammers and our needles. It is more difficult to work the bones, to chip and flake them into form, than it is to shape our tools of metal; for we have ways of heating and molding these, subtle methods handed down from the far older times of our fathers' fathers. There is no way to heat and mold a bone.

Our singers tell a legend that—oh, many years ago!—a man went by stealth and slew another man with his lance. Not many of us believed the legend even when we were children. To kill a man! Our singers say that he possessed a beautiful woman whom the slayer desired. Who would desire the woman of another man? Such a thing seems incredible and childish, even to a child. There are women for all men, men for all women, and do we not each love all others equally, reserving a special love only for our own mate? But the legend is sung that after this bloody deed was done, many men fought because of it, and their curst bones lie in the earth of Sunset Fields forever, a memorial to their fantastic stupidity.

It is a legend of the singers. Nobody really knows why the bones do not decay.

Beyond Sunset Fields run the three brooks: the Gray, the Blue, and the Crimson. Far to the south they meet, and there become the Wide River that flows turbulently on until it reaches the silver dash that encircles the world. There was a man of our people who once set out to find the end of the Wide River, but he never came back.

Beyond the trio of brooks there rise the first grim ranks of the Fearful Forest, line after line of tall broad-leaved trees so evenly spaced you would think they had been planted by design. Pass the palisades of this forest and brave its terrors, its darkness and great angry beasts, and you will come after a time to the other side; and there, beyond a black plain where nothing grows save crawling vines and noisome weed patches, you may see the towering cliffs of the country of The Nameless . . .

* * *

I am a hunter. My father was a singer, and his mate also; but I have a poor voice, good for little except to shout across the valleys to my friends, so my father, affectionately calling me Bear-throat, counseled me to become a hunter; and this I did.

I am strong, of course. My arms are brown as a deer's hide and they swell with muscle. My legs are sturdy and, though not thickset, can carry me at a run for the space of a day without tiring. I do not boast when I say this, for after all I am

a hunter and my arms and legs are my tools as much as my lances and arrows and metal knife. My name is Ahmusk, though I am more generally hailed as Bear-throat, the nickname my father gave to me. I have eyes the color of Blue Brook where it runs into a deep pool. My hair, the pale golden hue of the earliest corn of autumn, is cut short in the fashion of hunters, falling scarcely to my shoulders in back, in front sliced off evenly just above my eyes. And I think this is all that need be said concerning the person of Ahmusk the hunter.

The day of which I would speak first was a day of cheerful sun and small breezes, with that crispness in the air that makes a man stand tall and blink once or twice, and perhaps shout for joy. I did just that, after I had wakened, and then I sat on the edge of my platform and looking down the tree's trunk at the grass below I was astonished at its bright new-seeming greenness. I sucked in a great chestful of air and shouted again. In the tree nearest mine there were two platforms, and now someone sat up on the higher and rubbed her eyes and grumbled. "What is it, Bear-throat?"

"The morning, girl, the morning," I said heartily.

"Need you be a herald of the dawn every day?" she asked, mock-petulantly. And I laughed.

"Throw off your furs and smell the wind, Lora," I told her. "In the changing of the moon to nothing

and back to fulness, the snow will fly. Today is the best day of the year."

"To you, every day is the best of the year, or at least you say so each morning." She put back her sleeping furs and stood up, naked and young and beautiful. "When we are mated," she said, "I will see that you wake silently, and slide down the tree to find my breakfast while I sleep as long as I wish!"

"What a shrew," I said happily. "What a ruler of men."

"You will see." She slipped her light garment over her head. "I will quiet you down, young Bear-throat!"

"I hope the day is soon, then, for your mating," growled her father from the lower platform of their family's tree. "Perhaps good folk will then be allowed to rest."

GRINNING, I hung by my hands from the edge of my platform and dropped to the ground. Fifteen feet from toe to turf is no drop at all to a skilled hunter. The watchers were coming down the glen from their posts of the night, yawning and rubbing their eyes. I hailed them and they answered with waves of their arms.

"Any disturbances?"

"You would have heard, Ahmusk of the keen ears," said their leader. "No, we glimpsed a knifetooth bear traveling his solitary way to the Gray Brook, but if he killed thereafter we were too distant to hear it."

No noises save the small animals going and coming, going and coming all night long."

"It is nearly a moon's change since old Halfspoor ranged near the valley," I said. "He will be coming back soon, if I know his ways; and then there will be disturbances in the night."

The leader of the watchers shivered. As far apart as we stood, I saw him shudder. "But do not lose your day's sleep over him," I shouted reassuringly. "This very moment I go to look for his track. If he ranges within our lands I shall know, and a pair of hunters will watch with you."

"Watching is our duty, not yours," he answered a little sullenly. "Beware of Halfspoor, or he will be using your pelt for a sleeping fur, Ahmusk."

I was angered, I suppose. A hunter's pride is a powerful thing. "Halfspoor is only a knifetooth bear," I told him. "He is not, after all, one of The Nameless."

They looked at me in horror; and then they turned and went to their trees without a word. I felt ashamed of myself. It was an evil thing to use that terrible name so lightly. Then Lora had clambered down her tree and was standing near me, looking up into my face, so that I forgot all that I had been saying and knew only that every day this girl became more lovely.

"Good morning, Lora," I said.

"Are you really going to look for

Halfspoor?" she asked me, her eyes, that were like the purple bells of the burrowflower, all wide and wondering.

"I am."

"Perhaps he has left our lands."

"I have known Halfspoor for five years, Lora, or it may be six. I know his rangings and his times for killing; I recognize his track though it be on the hardest ground, and I could tell you which snuffling grunt was his if a full score of knifetooth bears were all talking at once. He is due to come back to-day, or tomorrow or the next day. He is old and wily, but set in his ways."

"I hope he has died on the banks of the Wide River," she said, brushing a strand of her onyx-black hair away from her face. "I hope his bones are gnawed by jackal-rats."

"And I hope your wish does not come true," I said lightly. "Because I have chosen his hide for our mating rug, young Lora."

"Oh!" she exclaimed suddenly, her great eyes going wide again. "I had forgotten to tell you. I was asleep when you returned last night."

"I trailed a wounded deer far down the Blue Brook, and caught him late. What had you forgotten, sleek Lora?"

"The guardian Laq asked me to be his mate. It was in the afternoon, and he asked me in the presence of my father. When I reminded him that you were to be

my mate, he asked my father for me."

I was shocked, then angered above any anger I had ever known. "He asked you," and then your father!" I roared. "What had your father to do with it?"

"Laq says that in the far olden times it was the custom to ask a woman's parents. My father was enraged and told him that we were not living in the far olden times. Laq said it was a pity we were not, as then the people had respect for their guardians. And my father, fuming and rumbling until I thought he would begin to give off sparks like Ruddy Mountain, told Laq that even a guardian had no right to ask for the promised mate of another man. Laq then departed, saying he would ask me again after Halfspoor had killed you, dear Bear-throat. Halfspoor again! His cruel words had slipped my mind until I spoke them now. Must you go looking for Halfspoor?"

"I must." Taking my bow from my shoulder, I tested it from habit, and counted the arrows in my quiver to ascertain that there were fourteen of them, for fourteen arrows are accounted lucky for a day's hunt. "I do not understand Laq," I told her. "He has broken two of the strongest customs. To ask you when you are promised . . . and then to ask your father for you, as though you were a hone hammer or a sleeping furi! Laq must

be losing his wits."

"Perhaps he was drunk on tree fern juice." She dismissed Laq and all his works with a shrug. "The sun has lifted over the hills, Bear-throat. If Halfspoor is so much more attractive than I am, why then go to him, young hunter with blind eyes."

I patted her smooth cheek. "Young, but not blind. Did I not choose the prettiest girl of all our folk, when we two were scarcely older than sucklings?" And with this compliment, which made her preen, I left her and walked swiftly down the glen toward Sunset Fields.

By the time I had crossed Sunset Fields and come to the Gray Brook, I had forgotten Laq and pushed Lora to the back of my mind. The day was perfect. Every bird in the world was making merry on his twig, every small animal had left his burrow to romp drunkenly through the underbrush, intoxicated with the bright keen air of morning. I passed a doe with her fawn, trotting happily toward the water; and I did not bring her down, though she would have been easy prey and good eating, for we shared a joy that made us sib to one another.

Still, for me the pleasure of autumn was now only a background against which my thoughts of Halfspoor the bear marched in orderly fashion while I reviewed them one by one. I recalled his sayings of

men, his occasional and very skillful stalking of the night-watchers in their trees at either end of our valley. I remembered how on this morning he would be found asleep in his old lair under the two fallen petrified tree ferns downstream near the Blue Brook, while on that morning he would be gnawing the bones of bison or cave cat or perhaps even of jackal-cat (for he was a dirty feeder, was Halfspoor), far up the Crimson. I visualized his footprint, unique among knifetooth bears, measuring as long as my arm from wrist to shoulder, and with three outer toes gone from the right hind pug. As I waded through the Gray Brook's chilled waters I could almost imagine that I saw the maimed sign of his pad on the silver strand before me. "How well I know that track!" I exclaimed to myself, with an egotistic pride in my craft; and then I came out of the waters to find that, far from so clearly imagining it in all its enormous crippled particulars, I had actually been looking at the veritable track of Halfspoor himself. I was exultant and humiliated at the same time.

Halting above it, I tested my bow once more, and counted the fourteen bone-pointed arrows in their quiver that I had made from the paw and forearm pelt of another knifetooth bear, my lucky quiver with the claws still hanging from its tip. The metal knife was in its sheath at my hip, the bone

hatchet dangled from a sling handy to my left hand. I took a deep breath and began to follow the great mutilated prints overland toward the second of the three streams.

Soon I had crossed the Blue and was approaching the Crimson Brook. Halfspoor was perhaps two hours ahead of me. Where he had trodden in sand, the water had filled his track, and where he had ambled heavily across grassy spaces, the blades had sprung nearly to uprightness again. He was traveling slowly, inspecting logs and coverts, probably talking to himself in the gruff complaining whine of his breed. Here and there he had lingered a moment or two, and in these places I could often catch a whiff of his rank ursine odor.

AT first I had no desire to catch up with Halfspoor. Almost would I rather have come face to face with one of The Nameless! No hunter is a match for a full-grown knifetooth bear, standing as he does more than twice as tall as a man, with an unbelievable bulk that must outweigh twenty-five humans, every ounce of which is full of fight and choler and wickedness. His twin saber-tusks jut down in great deadly arcs, yellow and sharp and long as a hunting arrow. His head is larger than that of any animal, even than that of the cave cat who lives to the north and can be heard yowling a full day's journey away. When a knifetooth bear

opens his maw it is like staring into a huge fang-rimmed scarlet well. His paws are swift gargantuan weapons that can enfold and crush the largest stag. Oh, a terrible beast is old knifetooth! And Halfspoor was the biggest, the angriest, the wisest and most hateful of his tribe.

I tracked him but did not hurry overmuch; when I had decided where he would spend the night, I would return to the glen, and persuade a dozen of our hunters to accompany me to find him. If he lay over a kill, stupid and drowsy with eating, we would attack him. Some of us might die, but Halfspoor also would die . . . if we were lucky. By right of my trailing I would then lay claim to his pelt, and from it make a mating fur for Lora. And the watchers would feel happier as they sat the nights through in their trees at the ends of the valley, because Halfspoor would never trouble them again.

On this I thought as I crossed the Crimson Brook, and saw the first line of trees rising from gray tangled thickets that marked the beginning of the Fearful Forest. Halfspoor's pugmarks went straight toward them. And it was then that I began to form my daring plan. The bear was obviously going to go to ground somewhere in the woodland, and no hunter would follow me into that dreadful place after sundown.

Why not follow him and kill him

myself?

Of all the folk, I alone had killed a knifetooth bear. Truly he had been but partially grown, and I had not deliberately stalked him to kill; no, I had blundered on him and it had been slay or he slain. But in that fight I had learnt much of a knifetooth's tactics, blind spots and weaknesses. His arm was now my quiver, his hide my sleeping rug. Halfspoor was only twice his size, at most, and surely the best hunter of the glen was a match for him? I who could loose four arrows and notch a fifth before the first struck its mark a hundred paces off—why should old tribal fears and the experiences of lesser men keep me from trying my hand at conquering this maimed brute?

I went into the dark dimness of the Fearful Forest.

THREE is something I do not like about a deep tangled forest, and that is the lack of sunshine. The light is green and cool, and at intervals you will see a thin beautiful shaft of yellow spearing down from an opening far above; but unless you come to a glade there is no chance of catching a glimpse of the sun in its glory riding the blue fleece-clouded sky, and without the sun I feel lonely and somehow half-lost. It is why I would make an indifferent watcher, for they must wake by night and sleep by day. I am a sun-worshipper of the first order. I need its

blazing all about me in order to be wholly myself.

Of all woodlands, the least lovely is the Fearful Forest. As I have said, its trees are spaced evenly as though they had been planted by someone in the far olden times. Their wide leaves are dark blue-green with emerald veins running beneath the surface. Their holes are thick and have rough hard bark, unlike the smooth-skinned tree ferns of Sunset Fields. Between their roots orange and black mushrooms and strange pale sick-looking fungi lurk, and crawling upward toward the invisible sun go lichens of every hue from mauve to sanguine. Where the branches begin there is a riot of parasitical growths, thick vines and murderous mistletoe, climbing plants that bear huge trumpets of orchids, every sort of disagreeable creeper that lives on the energy of its stronger brethren. All this vile vegetation makes an almost impenetrable roof over the whole Fearful Forest. On the ground between the trees lie heaps of long-decayed touchwood, squat thickets of brier, lightning-blasted limbs only beginning to crumble, and a deep soft carpet of dead things, from the half-dissolved flora of which peer white rib cases and gleaming, grinning skulls. The Fearful Forest reeks of death, of murdered animals and plants, of life that is not healthy nor productive of anything save more death.

There are trails through the

depths of this dismal woodland, paths made by bears or stags or the giant dogwolves that range in packs of a hundred. Smaller aisles are made by jackal-rats and the other lesser animals. Halfspoor was following a deep trench of a trail that ran almost straight toward the opposite side of the forest.

FOR a long while I followed this pathway, glancing at the ground now and again to be sure the knife-tooth bear had not turned off; and my mind was oppressed against my will by thoughts of horror, generated, doubtless, in the dreary sunless vistas about me. Indeed, I would have gone back had it not been for the bold and idiotic plan I had conceived, of slaying Halfspoor single-handed. Several times a jackal-rat crossed my road, snarling at me, its scurly brown hackles lifted. The third such loathsome beast I skewered with an arrow out of sheer dislike, retrieving my shaft before I passed on.

Suddenly I halted. Before me on a patch of mold lay the print of the bear, and within its great outline was a second track, that of a man. Another human was following Halfspoor! I was astonished. I knew where every hunter of the glen-folk ranged today, and none should be near the Fearful Forest. Kneeling, I stared closely at the footprint. I knew it well, as I knew the spoor of every man in this region. Laq the guardian was before me in the

woodland.

Laq! He who had so oddly broken two of the oldest customs—say rather immutable laws—of humanity. We are supposed to love one another equally, and for the most part we do; reserving, as I have said, a special love for our mates and a heightened reverence for our guardians. But I could not feel any very powerful affection for the guardian Laq that day. I was disgruntled and wrathful to find that he was somewhere ahead.

Certainly he had a perfect right to be in the Fearful Forest. The guardians passed this way with some frequency, and no hunter or singer or watcher of the night envied them their solitary journeys . . . nor their mysterious and appalling duties at their destination!

For the guardians were the only barrier, as we all had been told from childhood, that stood between mankind and The Nameless. The calling was hereditary, limited to certain families. Dedicated at birth to their lifelong task, the guardians learned their secrets from their fathers, and imparted not a syllable of them to anyone outside the craft so long as they lived. It was thought that perhaps only those of select blood lines had minds capable of holding these secrets without going insane; it was thought—oh, many many things were thought of the guardians! Generally aloof, wrapped in the cloak of esoteric knowledge, they lived among us as

superior beings, complex where we were simple, sober where we were light-hearted, supremely important where any one of us could be replaced by a score of others.

Over The Nameless the guardians had power, and kept them confined to their stark and blighted-seeming country beyond the Fearful Forest. I never knew a man so daring or so rash as to ask any sort of impertinent question of a guardian, whether about his work or his cabalistic secrets or his terrible charges. The less said or even thought of The Nameless, the better.

So the guardians moved between the glens and the jagged cliffs, revered by men and shunned by beasts of prey, accepting food and comforts and at times a mate from our ranks; the sole protection of humanity from their age-old enemies . . .

The Nameless!

SUDDENLY I realized I was approaching the limits of the Fearful Forest. I peered keenly at the great mutilated tracks in the mold. Yes, it was still Halfspoor I followed, and here was Laq's mark too.

I think it was then that I began to feel fear, when I knew that I should have to skirt the country of The Nameless. It never entered my head that Halfspoor would go straight on across the blackened plain; surely not even a bear would

pass too near the forbidden lands. But he was evidently going to have a distant look at them, and so perforce I must have one likewise.

Soon the trees thinned a little, and daylight crept toward me from between their boles. Then in a few moments I stood on the edge of the woodland. I began to sing to myself in a tuneless murmur. There was very little joy in me, and I felt I would be happier with some man-made noise, even such noises as came from my unskilled throat.

One sweeping glance I gave the plain before me. There were the slimy pools with their odious tufts of weeds and strings of water vines emerging like sentient things of evil. There were the undulating bare stretches of black dead soil from which nothing sprouted. And beyond, strange cragged rocks and cairns upreared haphazardly in profusion for many thousands of paces, until at last the raw red cliffs leaped up to cry a halt to them and all this barren, frightful country . . . beyond the cliffs, what man knew what might be?

One glance, and then I flung myself into a pile of touchwood, scattering the punk in blinding, billowing clouds and bruising my shoulder on a bidden stump. As I had heard the thin twang of a bowstring, I now heard the quick heavy crump of an arrow striking a tree, just before my face was buried in the crumbling tinder. I rolled over behind a log, eyes full of the dry

powdery stuff and nostrils twitching against the longing to sneeze. My own bow was in my hand and an arrow nocked before I rubbed my vision clear; then I peered cautiously over the log in the direction whence the shaft had come.

NOTHING moved, so presently I bounced to my feet and went over to the right to inspect the arrow, which had buried itself two finger-lengths in the bark. I broke it off and stared at the feathers and green-dyed butt. It was one I had made myself.

Standing without movement, I listened hard, and at last heard someone's careless foot crack a twig in the distance. Then I allowed myself the luxury of an ear-shattering sneeze.

One of our own glen-folk had shot at me. There was no escaping that fact. It might have been anyone save a hunter, for all of us made our own weapons, giving the surplus to be divided among the less adroit men of the other callings.

In the split second between the string's song and the thunk of the arrow, it had flashed into my mind that one of The Nameless was shooting at me. For of course no one knew exactly what they did, just how they injured men, or even what they looked like; they might be ogres with twelve arms and seven heads, carrying half-a-dzzen bows . . .

But this was an arrow of my

making. That meant that the shot had been a warning to return to a safer place, an admonition that I was wandering too far, sent dramatically by one of the patrolling guardians.

Yet why had he not merely stepped up and warned me? All the guardians knew me well. They knew I would be tractable to any suggestion. Why had he shot and fled?

So conditioned is our race to amity and all-embracing brotherly love, so incredible is the thought of violence between men, that it took quite five minutes of cogitation before the terrible idea occurred to me: that it might have been Laq, a jealous and hate-filled Laq, shooting not to warn, but to murder.

I remembered the legend of the bones of Sunset Fields, and a sickness took me in the pit of the stomach for a while. Then I put the grotesque thought from me, and went to look for Halfspoor's trail once more.

IT ran clear and straight out across the black plain; I rubbed my chin and hesitated briefly. Then, nocking an arrow, I strode out and away from the edge of the Fearful Forest. My skin began to crawl, crawl with dread, but with scowling eyes I traced the prints before me, and there was no possibility in my mind of turning back now. Remembrance of the shaft in the tree was angering me more with

every step. Warning or murder weapon, its insolent caveat was the final stimulation I had needed to force my frightened body onward.

If you are not a hunter, perhaps you will not understand the intense and passionate ascendancy that a stalk may gain over a man's will. He begins in a spirit of sport, it may be, thinking, "I shall pit my wits against this stag—or bison, or cave cat—and see if I can out-think him." Then after so long he begins to feel feverish about the temples, his hands sweat, his breath comes shorter; and suddenly it is not an idle hour's sport, but a whole life he is living in these moments, a veritable microcosm of existence, and the quarry is not simply a great dangerous animal, but all foes-men, all desirable goals, everything he wants for himself and in the same moment everything he has fought and will fight forever. I cannot make it plainer. It is just this: the longer the hunting, the more acute grows the urgency to come up with and slay this fleeing creature, whether it be jackal-rat or eagle or two-ton knifeteeth bear. If the hunter be a real man, he will not cease from pursuit while there is wind in his lungs and a modicum of strength in his hands.

Even though the game lead him into such a place as the country of The Nameless, from which, as we all have been told from infancy, there is no escape, your true hunter cannot stand and let it go. I had

been making pictures in my head for half a day's spooring, of what I should do to this great ursine brute when I caught him; I was entirely incapable of returning empty-handed. I think that even without the impetus of that furtive skulker with the arrow, I would have gone on. As it was . . . I quickened my pace.

The blackened plain was broader than it had seemed from the forest. I trotted briskly over it, avoiding the stinking pools, and on all its grim surface nothing moved except myself. The pugmarks of Halfspoor went straight as an owl's death-strike toward the broken cairns and ragged rocks. Biting my lips with determination, I followed them. I was in a strange state of single-mindedness, like a man drunken on fermented tree fern sap who knows only that he wants to do one thing and that, no matter how ridiculous it may be, nothing will stop him from doing it.

ALREADY I had gone a thousand paces farther than any man of my race—save the guardians—had ever gone before. The earth beneath my bare toes was gritty, almost like powdered stone, and I did not wonder that nothing grew here except in the scummy pools of stagnant rainwater.

Now the first of the queer calms was before me. Halfspoor had gone around it. So did I.

A shadow moved in the far cor-

ner of my left eye. I gazed swiftly toward it, but it was gone.

A shudder ran up the back of my legs and quivered across my shoulders till my hands shook. Yet my stalking-madness would not let me be long afraid.

Here was a plot of ground between two walls of unevenly-piled rocks. Trails of jackal-rats threaded its smooth surface, and across Halfspoor's prints ran those of a big lone dogwolf. I was bewildered. Could this be the country of The Nameless, over which even the eagles feared to soar? Or did it lie, perhaps, beyond those bleak cliffs yonder?

Here Halfspoor had caught himself a jackal-rat. Said I not that he was a fool feeder? He had torn the scavenger in two and spent five or ten minutes in wolfing down the tenderer portions.

Where was he heading, this temerarious bear? What curious siren call was luring him (and quite possibly me) to destruction?

I paused by a wall, to pick out with the point of my knife a thorn that had been working its way into my heel. This wall, now: it appeared to have been built a-purpose. The base was straight and made of thick square blocks, the upper rows knocked a little out of line but still fairly even. Between the stones was a crumbly, grainy material, and in places it still adhered to the rock in lumps and patches. I scratched my head over it, forgetting Half-

spoor. Suppose, now, a man wanted to build a wall of such huge stones—provided he found a way to move them in the first place, for they were enormously heavy—would he not concoct some gummy or cohesive substance with which to hold them together? And in the course of time, of many moons and years, would this substance not possibly harden and then decay, leaving traces such as I now pried away with my thumbnail?

But what would a man want with a wall like this?

A light shone in my mind. Why, if he had such a wall erected across one end of a glen, it might keep the carnivores from his tribe's trees, and there would be no need for more than one or two night watchers!

If I lived to return to our valley, I would lay this idea before my people. It was amazingly simple, and yet new. Surely no one had ever thought of it before.

Well, I went on through the rocky ruins.

Halfspoor was heading for the cliffs. In this bad unfamiliar soil it was hard to judge the age of his traces, but I thought he could not be more than half an hour ahead of me now.

Again a shadow moved just beyond the range of my vision, and again when I looked around it had gone.

I thought of Laq. I should have

traced his footprints at the edge of the wood and discovered the truth concerning that arrow.

Shadows . . .

I was not exactly happy. But I traveled on over Halfspoor's trail, committed to the rash impulsive adventure beyond recall. At one point I passed a lair, dug out beneath one of the shapeless cairns and lined with torn fur, which stunk of dogwolf; the bones of many big hares littered the ground before its mouth, but there were none of the fierce occupants at home just then, and I passed on. There were more signs of beasts hereabouts than one could find in all the valleys back beyond Sunset Fields, and my amazement grew within me. This was not what the guardians had told us concerning the country of The Nameless, they who were doom and destruction to everything that drew breath.

Here was a place where Halfspoor had seated himself to rest, in a corner of the ancient walls. Tiny tufts of grizzled fur were left sticking to the rough surface, where the bear had rubbed his back contentedly over the stones. I inhaled deeply of his scent. He was not far ahead now!

INDEED he was not; less than two hundred cautious paces had I gone when his mighty frame rose before me, towering up beyond a rock so abruptly that I thought he must have heard me and lain in

wait. Then I realized, even as my fingers flew in a panic to my quiver, that his back was toward me and he was staring forward and up, making a guttural pleading sort of noise in his chest. I could scarcely shoot him in the back (it would only have enraged him anyway), so I slipped off to the left and crept along behind a low broken wall until I judged I was opposite him. Carefully I raised my head. There he was, all fourteen feet of him, his monstrous head tipped back and his mouth open, so that his twin fangs in profile seemed but a single terrible yellow tusk. I might have lanced an arrow through his cranium then, but . . . well, Ahmusk the hunter is no assassin. When the day comes on which I dare not fight fairly, even with a knifetooth bear, then I shall break my bow and take to garland-weaving.

I stared up to see what he was moaning at. Before him at a little distance rose a thing like a flat-faced precipice, which I had been watching and wondering about for some minutes. It appeared to have been *constructed*, like the low walls I had examined; but its stones were even larger than theirs, and its overall surface much smoother. At regular intervals, and in series of evenly spaced lines, across this uncanny cliff, there ran large square openings, like many blind eyes in an acre. There were five of these horizontal lines of holes, rising up until the top of the cliff all shat-

tered and craggy put an end to them. I would say this strange erection was more than seventy feet high.

Framed in one of the holes on the second level sat another knifetooth bear, deep brown where Halfspoor was grizzled, smaller than the old scoundrel by a third of his bulk, and—my word on it!—an expression of coyness about her shaggy face that nearly made me burst out laughing. This was the lodestone which had dragged him inexorably over the brooks and through the Fearful Forest, even into the land of The Nameless. A female! A bear-wench!

She glared at him sidelong, her black nose pointed down and her comparatively short two-foot fangs digging into her shoulder; while Halfspoor, giddy and fatuous with love, made his drooling noises of courtship.

I sat down with a bump—he was oblivious to me and to everything but his light-o'-love—and chuckled helplessly. Then I frowned. What should I do? Leap up and dance to attract his attention? Or leave him to his wooing and trust to run across his trail another day? You will understand that my stalking-fever, which even the country of The Nameless had not been able to dispel, was misted away by this development as though it had never been. Poor old Halfspoor! It would be a scurvy trick to interrupt him

now with death.

And even as I thought these comradely thoughts, the whine of an arrow came from nowhere and on its heels the angry squall of the giant bear. I twisted round and looked over the wall. There was a shaft, fleshed in his furry thigh; and Halfspoor was gazing at me with no friendliness whatever.

It was no time for idle wondering as to the source of that arrow. Indeed, I think I knew instinctively who had sent it over my head into the courting bruin. But as I leaped the scattered rocks and dodged the higher walls of that ruinous place, I was seeking only an advantageous battleground, not the stealthy prowler with the bow. At my back I could hear the wrathful snorting of the knifetooth bear, the swift thud-thud of his enormous paws, and the rattle of stones dislodged by his whirlwind passage.

My bow was in my hand, a lean arrow nocked on the cord. Hastily as I ran I gripped two others between the fingers of my left hand. Skirting a heap of gray lichen-grown rubble, I whirled on my toes and sent the first missile back at him. When I could risk a glance again, he had fallen a little behind, being some forty long paces in the rear, and was swatting impatiently at the broken shaft protruding from his thigh. I think my own shot had missed him, and considering my haste, I was not surprised.

I halted and taking a decent aim

I loosed one at his head. At the same moment he roared loudly, opening his immense mouth to its full extent. Luck not being with me, the arrow glanced off one of his overgrown fangs with a sharp click, which appeared to startle Halfspoor considerably, because he stopped dead and blinked down his muzzle in a quaint way. I shot the third of my arrows and tore a long red furrow up one gray-sprinkled cheek. Then, as he was nearly atop me in four sudden raging bounds, I fled like a hare amongst the ruins. His coughing and bellowing echoed like implacable thunder in my ears.

THREE was a deep and narrow gut of a trench that ran between two high stone walls. In jumping it I had an idea; doubled back, narrowly missed being decapitated by a swipe of one savage paw, and dived over the rocks into this curious thoroughfare. Scuttling like a jackal-rat, I went on toes and fingers off to the right, with Halfspoor's vociferance threatening to crack my eardrums. Two or three times he reached down for a blow at my back, and I actually felt the wind of his pad's thrust on my nape. Then he darted ahead, if such a titanic monster may be said to dart, and leaning over one wall he waited for me. Clever brute! He would scoop me out of my ditch like a fish from a runlet, would he? I vaulted the wall opposite to his side and after one hasty shot flew

into a crazy labyrinth of ancient ramparts and disintegrating inclosures. An insane bawling told me I had probably hit him again. I had ten arrows left. My confidence was growing. Only let me find a tall cairn to scale, and I would make Halfspoor into a positive porcupine with those ten missiles.

A sun-blind owl sat in a filthy nest among fallen blocks of stone. As I dashed past, it blundered out and flew into my face, beating its heavy wings and jabbing furiously at my eyes with its little hooked bill. I fended it off with the bow, gripped my bone-headed hatchet and with a long-armed glancing swing hit it under one of the big dazzled eyes. It fell away, screeching, and I ran on. Halfspoor's grunt was close behind.

Then, some distance off, I caught the sound of howling, and knew that a pack of fierce dogwolves were running on a scent. I hoped they would not come here to complicate matters.

THREE was a place where broken walls flanked a row of stones which rose gradually upward, somewhat like a ladder placed halfway between horizontal and vertical; that is, a man could step on one stone, then up on the next, then the next, and so on, until he found himself quite high in the air. The row ended on a flat floor open to the winds of heaven, some twenty-odd feet from the ground; and here

and there around this flat place irregular rocky projections rose. I had seen enough of this country by now to know that the projections must once have been another wall, rising to enclose this flat floor. Why someone, or something, had gone to so much trouble to make these ancient walls, I could not imagine. At first I had thought it must have been a truly gigantic being, to lift the huge stones. Now I had seen so many inclosures roofed over (as we roof over our platforms with thick fronds during the brief weeks of the winter) at a height of no more than nine or ten feet, that I could not believe a giant had made them. Why should he make a place in which he would have to lie down, never standing? But on the other hand, that may have been the case. It was hardly the time for philosophical speculations. I trotted up the stone ramp briskly and cast my eyes about for a good shooting-nook.

Halfspoor was hot after me. He dropped to all fours and came up the graduated stones as though he had been using such conveniences all his life—and it was not truly so different from climbing a rocky hill, except that this was smoother going. I dashed for a heap of rubble at one corner. Leaping this, I crouched down as Halfspoor hit the top at a run. I shot at him and my ill luck was still with me, for again my shaft glanced off one of his frightful tusks. Surely an evil

fog lay over my eyes that day! He charged in my direction and I had time for but one more swift arrow, which I had the good sense not to aim at his head. It buried half its length rather low in his shoulder and he squalled resentfully. Then I slipped over the edge and dropped to the ground.

I had calculated the drop well. It was too much for his bulk. He loomed above me, raging. I put an arrow in his cheek, and he bit down hard and spat out the head and part of the shaft. I drew a good bead on his eye but he turned much more quickly than I had anticipated and the missile whined away in the sky. He headed back for the climbing stones. I looked about me. There was a broken inclosure nearby in one wall of which was an entrance like a cave mouth, perhaps seven feet high by two broad; it seemed as good a place as any to dodge into, and I did. There I awaited his coming, controlling my breathing as best I could in order that my next shots would not be so shamefully wasted.

Then I heard the dogwolf pack much closer. They yapped and yowled, and mingled with their excited noise was the petulant grunt of Halfspoor. Still I waited, but he did not come. Then I knew by the sounds that the dogwolves had surrounded him. Here was an odd happening! Certainly no dogwolf would attack a knifetooth bear, even

though he ran with five score other canines. Only a very silly human hunter would pit himself against old Halfspoor.

But, by my love for Lora, they were shepherding him across the ruins! I caught a glimpse of the old devil backing reluctantly up a mound, and then as I gaped he turned and shambled off down a black ravine, complaining and waving his forepaws angrily. In a great circle they followed him, nipping at his heels, leaping out of range, and keeping up an incessant clamor that sounded like boys teasing a captured cave cat kitten.

I counted the arrows in my quiver. There were six now. Ill luck rode my shoulders that day. Halfspoor should be bleeding to death with eight shafts in his chest and head; instead he had four or five inconsiderable wounds, one of which I had not even given him.

I spat on the ground, wishing I had a drink of water. Ahmusk, mighty stalker of knifetooth bears! I laughed without mirth. Ahmusk, desperate invader of the land of The Nameless. There, now, was a title for a brave man; but I had come here in the grip of hunting-fever, and so little credit attached to me for the deed. I was in a mood to revile myself aloud. I smote my bare thigh and swore heartily. What should I do now about Halfspoor? There was no profit in advertising my presence to the dogwolf pack. They had been known to pull down

men if they were hungry.

I put my hands to my ears and rubbed them roughly, for of a sudden they were tingling and prickling. It was as though I had heard a high unpleasant sound; but except for the distant roar of Halfspoor and his antyvers, there was nothing. The country was bewitched, that was it. There was a pause, and then my eardrums thrilled briefly again to something I could not locate or analyze.

I glanced behind me at the inclosure. Roofless, I had the feeling that it must once have been roofed; there were low piles of rock trash all about, as there would have been had the roof—fallen now—been somehow impossibly made of stone. What prodigies of strength and skill had wrought these incredible walls? I shook my head, and turned back to the entrance.

There was something approaching slowly over the ruined structures to my right. I looked at it with widening eyes. It was about a hundred paces off. For one sickening moment I believed it to be some horrid kind of ogre, made of muck or rotted flesh or some such grisly matter; it seemed slimy and dead . . .

Then the sun struck it, and I decided that it was simply covered with long trailing dark hair, which glistened wetly in the rays of the dying sun.

It came on, and my knees smote

together while my tongue stuck to the roof of my sudden-dried mouth.

In form it was like a man. Indeed, had a man been smeared with black mud, and then been given a coat of heavy hair, oily or permanently damp hair, he might well have resembled this creature. I judged it to be about six feet or a little over, my own height; and so later it proved to be. It moved oddly, with a sort of halting gait, weaving its arms to keep its balance on the jagged rocks. I could see two deep blackish pits in its head where its eyes would be, and matted straggly hair fell lifelessly from its crown. It was naked, like an animal.

I thought of my mother's old songs of the ogre-breed, which can take all manner of shapes, but often emulate mankind, building their frames magically from dead beasts or from the masses of decomposing vegetable matter in the forests. Maybe my first idea had been right, and this was an ogre of mire and pelts, all wickedness.

At any rate, it was coming at me, if rather slowly; and so I put an arrow to the string, being minded to die bravely as becomes a hunter of the glen-folk.

Seeing me raise the bow, it waved at me in protest, and with so human a gesture that I could not shoot it, but only held my weapon ready. It then raised one hand to its face, with something bright in its fingers (it had fingers, I could see, like a man's), and my ears

tingled again to the unheard sound or vibration which had bothered me previously.

FROM the rains behind it rose the noise of dogwolves barking. It nodded, like a man who would say to himself, That is good. Then it came on with its slow, almost apologetic pace. I lowered my bow. Somehow I felt that it meant me no injury.

When it was no more than half-a-dozen feet off, it halted; and we stared at each other curiously.

It was a hairy brute, to be sure, but evidently no ogre. Its thatch glistened darkly, and seemed of the consistency of a cave cat's mane, but without curls; lank, long, and thick. In the places where this mantle did not grow, as on the cheeks and forehead and on the rounded portions of the limbs, there was a short dusky shag, a nap like that on a knifetooth bear's muzzle. The effect was startling, but on close inspection not really ugly, and wholly without the impression of terror which my first sight of it had brought. It appeared to be watching me steadily, though its eyes were entirely hidden in their sunken shadowed wells. Finally it put up its right hand to the level of its waist and held it there. I could not see the significance of the gesture. After a moment it thrust the open hand out to me in several short jabs. The motion was entirely without menace. I could make noth-

ing of it.

It clasped its hands together and shook them. Then it stuck the right one toward me again. I realized that it wished to touch my own hand!

I shifted my bow to my left hand—so sure had I grown in these few brief seconds that it meant no harm—and touched its hairy finger-tips. Instantly my hand was enfolded in a firm hearty grip, and moved rapidly up and down. I cannot explain how or why the emotion swept over me, but immediately I felt a warm friendship for this shaggy being, such a feeling as I had never held before for anything save my fellow men and women of the valleys.

And there was something else. The gesture felt . . . felt natural, and proper, and almost familiar, as though I had done it many times before!

Mystified, I drew back my hand as he released it; and once more we stood staring at each other without sound.

A movement at last caught my eye, and staring over his shoulder I saw two great dogwolves breast a wall and come loping toward us. With a warning cry I threw up my bow. In the time it took me to change hands on it, he had peered back; then he gave a cry, remarkably manlike in tone, and waved urgently at my face. Scowling, I dodged back to get a

shot at the foremost brute. At once the hairy thing knelt, as if pleading, and the pair of dogwolves, coming up, fawned on him with lolling scarlet tongues.

My jaw dropped and I gasped, dumbfounded.

The fierce beasts were his friends!

I slung my bow over my shoulder, but took the precaution of grasping my bone hatchet. The dogwolves stared at me, their hot eyes as puzzled as no doubt my own were; but they made no move toward me.

The hairy being stood up and came forward to touch me lightly on the chest. Then he shook my right hand up and down again. The dogwolves crept on their bellies to our shadows, and one of them, a giant of a fellow, touched my foot with his wet nose, whining a little.

If there has ever been a more astonished person than I was at that second, he must have fainted away with his wonder. I know I grew quite giddy. Now, I said to myself, if Halfspoor were to amble up to me and ask for the loan of my knife, I think he would get it without a question or a raised eyebrow!

The big carnivores lay panting beside us, and the dark rough-coated manlike creature rubbed his chin and stared at me from those deepset eyes; which I could make out now, as they were glittering in a stray beam of sunlight that fell

across his strange face.

He said something to me. It was not an animal's noise, but a reasonable imitation of human speech, except that none of the words were familiar.

At once I remembered the young hunter who had come to our glen several years before, from a country far to the north. His language, while much the same as ours, had words in it which we had never heard; and the elders of the tribe said that probably other folk, living in other isolated places, must have developed words of their own too,

THIS being, of course, seemed to me at first no more a man than were the dogwolves at his feet. He had the same general form, yes, and perhaps even the exact conformation of features under that mat of hair; but what human by any stretch of the imagination could ever grow such a pelt?

Nonetheless, his voice was pleasing enough to the ear, and his speech seemed separated into distinct words, though as I have said, none of them were familiar to me.

I said, "Friend what-is-it, you undoubtedly know what you're talking about, but I do not. I would give a new set of hunting arrows to be able to understand you."

He uttered more words, pointing off to the west where the tall raw cliffs were even now shutting off the lower half of the sun.

"Yes," I said, "evening comes on, and you're afraid I'll wonder over into the country of The Nameless. Is that it? Never you fear, my friend, I'll not go a step farther in that direction."

But he took my hand, hesitantly and as though afraid that I might be offended; and he tried to lead me westward.

I hung back, and the dogwolves growled a little, but desisted when he spoke to them. Then he signed to me, as plainly as one could imagine, that there was food where he was taking me; and so because of my grumbling belly I suffered him to lead me off among the ruins of this fabulous place.

As we walked I thought of Lora, and her distress in the morning when she would find me still away; but not for anything would I tread the paths of the Fearful Forest at night. I must find a sleeping place nearby.

We passed the flat-faced precipice with the five lines of square openings, where Halfspoor's brown lady had been sitting. I pointed up and said, "Knifetooth bear!" He cocked his head at me. I hunched my shoulders, put two fingers athwart my lips for fangs, roared like a bear and said, "Knifetooth!" again.

The hairy one stopped, opened his mouth—he had teeth as even and white as my own—and out of his throat came the exact duplicate of old Halfspoor's batile cry.

The dogwolves leaped and barked excitedly. I nodded agreement and said, "Bear!"

He said something guttural that sounded like *oorsa*. I made him repeat it several times. It occurred to me that *oorsa* is another of our names for old knifetooth; and my wonder grew apace.

Pointing to myself, I then exclaimed, "Ahmusk!"

He said my name with no difficulty, and then seemed rather confused; for he tapped his own black chest and said, "Ahmusk?"

I tried again. I touched the bigger of the two canines and said, "Dogwolf."

He mastered that more or less, and in return gave me his name for the brute, which was *poort* or *spoor*, I could not tell which. His sibilants were tongued so lightly that they were difficult to hear.

I indicated myself and said, "Man."

I prodded him and repeated it. Then I realized consciously for the first time that I was now regarding him as a species of human. He had taken me for kin before, as his former use of my name as a generic term plainly proved.

"Ahmusk," said I once more, beating my bosom.

"Ahmusk," said he, pointing; and then, laying a shining-haired paw on his own breast, "Dy-lee!"

"Dy-lee," I said, charming him no end, for he capered grotesquely and nodded his head till the lank

thatch flew.

Well, now we were acquainted. My pleasure at finding this strange brute-man was out of all proportion to its apparent importance. I suppose it was reaction to my hours-long suspicion that I had played the complete fool in coming into this country, in following the terrible Halfspoor, in ignoring the age-old forbiddance against crossing into the land of The Nameless . . . Now all seemed to have come out well. Halfspoor, who had been proving more than a match for me, had been harried off, evidently on orders from this Dy-lee creature, by a pack of dogwolves. The Nameless were nowhere in evidence. Food and possibly a tree for the night were in the offing. And I had made a wonderful discovery, a brain-shaking find; for if I was right, I had chanced upon a new branch of the family of men.

Through the ruins we went, the dogwolves at our heels; and we were as delighted with one another as two boys who have been given their father's old hone hatchet to play with.

THE silver dusk came up from the earth, spawned from the shadows of the many ruinous walls and ramparts; and far ahead I saw a scarlet eye wink out at us from the darkening cliff. I clutched Dy-lee's shaggy arm involuntarily, and hissed at him, as though he understood the words, "The Nameless!"

He understood, at any rate, that I was frightened; for he patted me awkwardly on the back two or three times, and said something in his language meant, by the tone, to be reassuring.

A hunter could not hang back where a brute-man like this went on. He obviously knew what the scarlet eye was, and seemed utterly without fear. And so after a time we had come near enough to it for me to see that it was no ghastly orb of a Nameless ogre, but the mouth of a cave, fairly high up the raw cliff, shining with the reflection of a fire deep within it.

Evidently Dy-lee meant to go into the cave, for soon we had struck a well-worn path and were traveling upward. I imagined that there were friends of his there, with whom he would eat before seeking his tree for the night. Overcoming my dislike of caves with a wrenching effort, I followed him up the path and stood on the threshold of the grotto, having a last look about me. From this vantage point I could see the glimmering of fires from several other great holes which had been hidden from the plain.

Then I went into the cave of Dy-lee the hairy man.

THE fire, leaping merrily within a ring of stones, heated the long tunnel-like cavern for many paces on all sides; and about it, some cooking meat, some engaged

in low-voiced conversation, and some making or repairing noose-traps, snares for rabbits and birds such as our children often play with, were a score or so of the long-maned people. My last doubt as to their humanity vanished at sight of the flames, for no animal can control fire. Except for their pelts, these folks might have been my own.

Some of them sprang to their feet as we entered, waving their arms and shouting. Dy-lee quieted them with a crisp word, and putting his hand on my shoulder he made a speech at which they all came crowding around, each one wanting to shake my hand up and down. It was all wonderfully friendly and heart-warming. Instinctively I loved these people, and pitied them a little, too, for that they must live so close to the terrible country of The Nameless.

At thought of those malignant beings, I remembered Laq the guardian, whose arrow (I felt sure) had goaded the bear Halfspoor into attacking me; but at once I put the bitter thought from me, and shaking the hand of one dark fellow while grinning amiably into the almost featureless face of another, I moved to the fire and was given a haunch of hare, all smoking and hot from the spits above the flames. After I had wolfed this, while the whole company stared at me and chattered among themselves, Dy-lee handed me some meat off the

brisket of a doe. I wondered how they managed to catch deer, for the only traps in evidence were the small rabbit-snares, while none of them carried lances or bows or even metal knives, but had some crude flint daggers with which they made shift to cut up their meat. Then my eye fell on several of the tame *poorts*, or dogwolves, lounging insolently about among the hairy folk; and I recalled their pack chivvying Halfspoor over the ruins. There was the answer! Incredible though it was, these men must have trained their four-footed companions to pull down deer—even stag and bison for all I knew—for the masters' larder.

I sat down on the floor by the ring of firestones, weary with tracking and fighting and surprises. At once all of them came close to me and seated themselves too, clamoring good-humoredly for their dinner. They still peered curiously at me, but with such a friendly air that no offense could be taken. As we ate, Dy-lee pointed to various members of the group, or family, as it possibly was, and told me their names, which I did my best to master. The oldest of them, a seven-foot giant of a man with very long grizzled-silver hair falling in cascades all over his body, was called Dy-vee, or Dy-veece, I could not be sure which. He seemed to be the chief, or the grandfather, for when a bevy of young females be-

gan to giggle loudly together, he spoke to them with authority and they were hushed.

The woman whom I took to be Dy-lee's mate was a slim, high-breasted she, whose hair was sleeker and finer than his, and on whose face the shag was lighter and not of so matted a nature. It was on this shy creature that I first perceived the color of the cave-folk's skin; when I was told her name (which was Zheena), she put back the long hair of her forehead with a very feminine gesture, and I saw that just around her eyes, less deepsunk than the males', there was no fur at all. The skin was white, like a winter's baby before it is tanned by the sun, and seemed smooth and firm. I resolved, when I should know Dy-lee better, to have a try at burrowing in the nap of his face to see if he too were white beneath it.

So we got through the meal somehow, between introductions and polite gestures and much high laughter at our mispronunciations and general inability to understand each other. When I had eaten all I could hold, I leaned back against a wall of this cheerful cavern, with my hands pillowng my head, and because my stomach was full and my heart light, I began to sing.

The effect was that of a lightning bolt striking among them. They stood petrified for long seconds, and then came swarming from everywhere to hear me; and I, whose

voice is admittedly like that of a wounded bison bellowing to its herd, stopped my song with a grunt and stared openmouthed at the shaggy people. Dy-lee made quick eager motions to me, opening his mouth time after time, and presently it was borne in upon me that they wanted me to sing again. They wanted Bear-throat to sing!

SO I sang. I caroled a love ditty, which made all the females roll their eyes and sigh; and I chanted a song of the hunt, which set all the bare hairy toes to beating on the rock floor. I sang all the songs I could recollect of my mother's repertory, the rollicking ones and the sad ones, the lullaby tunes and the haunting melodies that told our legends of the far olden times. For the space of at least two hours I sang to them, and when at last I stopped, for lack of breath and rawness of throat, and because I could not remember another song to save me, you would have thought the cave was falling in, such a noise they made. I saw then that many, many more had pressed into the place, until it was packed with scores of the hairy folk, and there was no vacant space anywhere in the grotto except for the little cleared place on which I sat. Even their great dogwolves were lying about watching me with quizzically cocked heads, and looking as though they enjoyed it.

They liked my singing! The all-

but-useless caterwauling of Bear-throat the hunter enchanted them to immobility! I could scarcely believe it, even though they had listened to me for so long.

I pointed at Dy-lee and by gestures, asked him to sing. He shook his head and shrugged, an especially human movement; as plain as if he had said it in words, I knew that neither he nor any of the others had ever known what it was to lift the voice in song. They were a people wholly without music. No wonder my bawling had enthralled them!

Gradually, the cavern cleared; although they obviously wanted to stay and listen to me, and gaze wide-eyed on my bronze hairless skin, old grizzled Dy-veece shepherded them out into the night with gruff barks of command. When only the family, or whatever this group might be, was left, he came to me and after patting me a few times and shaking my hand up and down, handed me a sleeping fur. It was cave cat, and very like my own blankets at home. I looked to be led out to a tree then, but saw that the folk were one by one lying down near the fire, wrapped in their furs and evidently intent on sleeping in the cave. I think this astonished me as much as anything I had seen in all that strange day, for who ever heard of sleeping anywhere but on a tree platform? Nevertheless, I could scarcely wound the feelings of my hosts by going out alone and thus refusing

their hospitality; so with a weak smile at Dy-lee and his mate, who were watching me anxiously, I spread the great yellow pelt on the bare rock, laid myself down on it, flipped the edges over me, and closed my eyes with the certainty that I would not get a blink of sleep all that night.

THE next thing I knew was that

I was very warm and drowsy, and that something was pressing cozily against me from both right and left. I opened my eyes, yawned, and found that I was flanked by a pair of the tame dogwolves, who were snoring gently into my ears. The fire was crackling under half-a-dozen spits loaded with meat, a number of the dark-haired people were moving about quietly, and the sun was heating straight in the door of the cavern with a cheerful orange light.

Dy-lee, seeing that I was awake, brought me water in half the shell of some great nut which I did not recognize; and Zheena, his mate, presented me with a choice of fruits set on a wooden slab that had been rounded and cleverly decorated with bright dyes.

After rinsing my mouth and eating an apple, I rose and stepped over a dogwolf to go to the opening and look out on a beautiful autumn day, crisp and clear as the one before had been. Then, after a few deep satisfying breaths, I returned and made a hearty breakfast of

meat in company with all the cave folk.

When we had finished, Dy-lee led me down the path to the place of ruins. By the vivid sunlight I could see that the walls at the base of the cliff were somewhat less shattered than the first ones I had come upon; and also that they were definitely no accidents of nature, but constructed. I asked by gesture if his race had built these walls, and he signed to me, No.

Shortly we came to an enclosure that still bore its roof. I went and peered into this strange square place, and Dy-lee kindly handed me a long torch of bound reeds soaked in black oily matter and lighted, the purpose of his carrying which on this bright morning I had not hitherto understood. Now I realized that he meant me to see everything there was to be seen, whether open or hidden from the light; and I smiled my thanks as I took the brand. Dy-lee and his two dog-wolves followed me into the place.

The roof was of stone, or perhaps of a stone, for I could detect no crack or joined place in all its surface. It was shored up by lesser stones, long and thick and ornamented with carvings that resembled the tendrils of the burrow-flower. These must have been scratched into the rock with a metal tool, I think; though it certainly would have taken the whole lifetime of a man to accomplish all the carving I saw there. I had never

seen or heard of anyone carving deliberate designs in anything before. The effect was lovely, albeit startling. Our glen-folk decorated many things with dyes made of vegetables and roots and minerals; but none had ever thought to adorn wood or stone with carvings. And here again I was astonished, for after the first moment or two, it seemed a natural and beautiful thing to do. It was like the shaking of the hands, something that was surprising only at the first acquaintance.

WHILE I stared about me, Dy-lee passed into a far corner and began to clear away a great heap of trash, broken wood, old discarded sleeping furs, and other useless articles, which had been piled in a haphazard fashion there. I followed him across the floor and saw that he had cleared a space in the center of which was a square slab of stone set into the floor, with a huge ring embedded in one side of it. This ring he now grasped, and began to tug and haul at it, grunting with the strain. The block of stone moved upward, fell, moved and fell again, and it seemed it would take him an age to lift it free. So I put my hand on the ring beside his. He relinquished it to me, I think out of curiosity to see how powerful I was; and it was then I discovered that I was much the stronger, for the slab came up out of its hole smoothly and easily

to my tug. Dy-lee straightened and said something in an awe-struck voice.

"That is the result of a hunter's life, friend Dy-lee," I said, grinning. "If you stalked with a bow and a hatchet, rather than a pack of dogwolves, you would be as strong as I."

Pointing down into the black well exposed by the raising of the stone, he indicated the torch in my hand. I thrust it down into the mouth of the well. There was a kind of sputtering sound from the brand, which I could not attribute to anything in particular, except perhaps that the fire was afraid to go down into that jetty darkness. Peering past it, I saw a line of the graduated stones that abounded in these ruined places, going down like a curious tilted rock ladder into the depths of the earth. Dy-lee made urgent motions to me, that I should go down. I shook my head. "Not for an extra year of life, friend," I said.

He took the torch from me and before I could stop him he had dropped into the pit. The two dogwolves brushed by me and followed him down.

Well, it ill became a hunter of the glen-folk to sit here gnawing his knuckles when even the brute beasts showed no fear of this terrible hole; so with many misgivings I took my first hesitant steps down the underground passage.

It was almost pleasant in the tunnel. I had expected chill and

dampness, but the walls were dry and quite warm to the touch, rather like the rocks on the sides of Ruddy Mountain, which is the cone-shaped hill that gives off sparks and smoke, far to the north of our land. As we progressed downward, the flambeau lighting our way, I seemed to notice even more heat; there may be a great fire somewhere beneath the earth of the ruined country—who can tell?

SHORTLY we came to a level stretch of tunnel, and some few score paces thereafter, to a widening portion which shortly became about as broad as the inclosure with the stone roof. Here it was like an ordinary cave, except that the floor and walls and ceiling were flat, with sharp angles at the jointures. The thought was inescapable: the giants or whoever had made all the walls and inclosures above had hollowed out the earth and made this place likewise. I examined the wall in one place (it was all alike, as much as I saw of it that day). Small smooth stones of agreeably differing colors were set in rows to form the surface, and their substance was such as I had never found before, being sleek and wonderfully glossy, as lustrous as the hair of my Lora in the morning sunlight.

Dy-lee now seemed excited, and urged me to follow him swiftly through the shining grotto. The dogwolves' claws clicked along the

level floor, and they constantly sniffed the air, which was musty and made our breathing rather labored. The big torch crackled and blazed brightly.

At last we turned a corner — as sharply angled as those at the base of the walls—and after one look I gave a cry of fear, of brain-breaking wonder.

How can I explain what I first thought I saw? It was . . . it was as if in this gallery there were many many square holes in the walls, and each of these holes gave on a vista of vivid color and much apparent movement; as though by some inconceivable magic there were different worlds beyond each hole!

I covered my eyes with an arm and moaned with terror. My knees smote together, my teeth chattered. And when Dy-lee laid a reassuring hand on my shoulder, I leaped as though Halfspoor himself had snorted in my ear.

With murmurs meant to restore my confidence, he led me to one wall and waited patiently until I found the courage to uncover my eyes. Then he pointed to the first of the large square openings. Seeing that nothing malignant had sprung out of it yet, and that the dogwolves had casually lain down in the light dust of the floor, I gripped my nerves with the teeth of my mind and peered closely.

AGAIN I am at a loss for words to tell of this marvel. It was

not a hole or opening, it was but an enclosed place on the wall, overlaid with a sheet of something so shiny and transparent that it must have been water frozen there forever by unthinkable sorcery. Beneath this motionless water, the figure of a woman looked out at us with calm unwinking gaze. She was dressed in fantastic furs, blue and emerald and gold, wrought in patterns that surely no one had ever seen before; her face, crowned by the gaudy feathers of a bird, was like those of my own people, being without hair and gentle-looking. After a long time of staring, I reached out to touch this wonder, and the still water over it felt cool and slick to my fingertips. The woman made no move as my hand passed before her. I was thunderstruck.

Dy-lee led me to the next enclosed place, and there was a man, clad as fabulously as the woman, with a stern look of resolution on his features. He seemed a curious hybrid, for while most of his face was as smooth as mine, on his chin was a fringe of dark hair such as covered Dy-lee's folk. Him I did not try to touch, for fear he should burst out of the frozen water at me.

With the third of these strange things I began to notice something else: namely, that the people — there were two behind this water — seemed very flat and completely without true substance. It is difficult to explain. It was as though a man

could be pressed flat as a leaf, and still hold his form, his color, even his life (though this was in abeyance, suspended as it were, yet waiting to break into movement at any second).

SO we went down the long gallery, and I saw more multitudes of wonders than ever I can tell. There were many sorts of folk in even more awesome furs and pelts than the first; men clad entirely in what appeared to be metal, and women in garments that surely never came from the cave cat or doe or anything that walks our world today. There were scenes I could not comprehend, enclosed flat places on the wall which I could not make myself believe were flat places at all, but rather must be the holes on vistas I had first thought them. These showed tiny trees and brooks, figures of people smaller than my thumb, even portions of the sky with infinitesimal clouds hanging motionless therein. And it was after I had looked on two or three of these that the truth began to come to me, like a fiery jewel of knowledge shining murkily up through the black waters of my ignorance. For these were not real people at all, nor real vistas, nor was there anything real or magical about them at all; they were flat places on the walls, whereon some clever man had laid multihued dyes, so that when all were applied this representation of reality sprang to its

mysterious, incredible, unmoving life!

I longed to ask Dy-lee if this was the true nature of the things, but could not think how to do it by signs. I therefore simply pointed at one of them and raised my brows questioningly.

"Peesha!" said he. "Peesha!"

It was, I gathered, a peesha. Whatever that might be.

He put a finger on a certain part of this peesha, and said, "Tree!"

I reeled. Literally I reeled, staggering back and dropping my jaw like a fool. "Tree?" I gasped. "Yes, yes, a tree!"

He made polite motions, asking me my word for it.

"Tree!" I shouted. I pointed to the beasts at our feet. "Dogwolves," I said, with one hand on my breast; then, aiming a finger at him and still indicating the two animals, "poort," I said. He understood that, for he nodded. I pointed to the wall. "Peesha," I cried, nodding to him, and then, "flat place with many dyes," I said in my own tongue. Finally, I waved at him and then at myself, and said, "Tree, tree. Tree, tree!"

HE grasped it then. He was as amazed as I had been. We had at least one word in common. It suggested astonishing possibilities to me. Eagerly I touched the sky in the representation before us, the clouds, the earth, a small hillock; naming them and getting his names

in return. Not until we came to a brook did our languages coincide again. Then I said, "Stream," and he said, as clearly as any man could, "River." "Yes, yes!" I shouted. "River, river!"

Babbling with excitement, he grasped my wrist and dragged me past several of the dye-images to a large one that was without the protecting rigid water, and which showed many men and women walking about between stone inclosures such as littered the ground above us. These inclosures, however, were not broken, but seemed whole and strangely beautiful, being decorated lavishly with carving and dyes. Some of them went up for hundreds of feet, as I could see by comparing them with the size of the people. Before this *peesha* he halted and proceeded to point out many things, naming them eagerly; but here we could not find anything for which we had a mutual name. Indeed, it was not remarkable, for most of the objects I had never seen until the day before, and then only in a ruined state.

And so we passed down the cavern until we came to the end, and crossed its narrow width to go back along the other side, looking at Dy-lee's uncanny "*peeshas*;" and at last we had seen them all, and I was too shattered for speech. Nothing like it had ever been thought of, had ever been dreamt of, had ever been seen by anyone in all my world, before today. That

one could do this with dyes! Some of them had had no water — he called it *glo*—over them, and these I had touched cautiously, finding their surfaces raised slightly here and there; and had come to the conclusion that the dyes had been mixed cleverly with harder substances, so that when they were put on the wall, they stiffened there and would not blur nor run together.

And nearly as wonderful as these things was the fact that there were points of contact in our languages, words which were the same in both tongues. "Hand" was *and* to him, or it may have been *hand* also, as his aspirates were breathed as lightly as his sibilants were tongued. *Tree*, *river*, and *owl* were the same. I grew quite wrought-up with the fascination of the game, and could scarcely wait to tell Lora all about it.

We went up the slanted stones to the surface, and after he had carefully hidden the entrance slab with the rubble again (I could not guess from what or whom), he led me across the ruins to another, whole roofed inclosure. This one we entered by a hole far up in one wall, raising two legs for a kind of bridge from the ground. Into this place the dogwolves did not follow, but lay down outside to await us.

DY-LEE's torch was burning low. When we had dropped into

the inclosure, he chose two more from a pile of them stacked neatly in a corner, and lit one from the first. It flared up redly, and again we raised a ringed slab and descended into another warm dry place of *peesha*s. By then, I may say, I had identified this with our own word "picture," which we use to describe several things, such as the images our minds form occasionally which seem to us very real, and also a distant view of a beautiful countryside, as perhaps from a hill; I felt certain that *peesha* was *picture*, and dimly I was wondering if our own race had once known this strange art of arranging dyes on walls. Certainly the similarity of the two words would indicate something of the sort.

He led me to one of the pictures—I will use this other word from now on—and held up the torch so that I could see it well. There was none of the frozen water at all in this place. The things were done in large squares on the rock wall, just as in the first underground grotto, but there was no *gloa*, nor was any of the slippery curious stone set around them. These walls were rougher and less shining.

The first one was very old, faded, flaked here and there so that the barren rock showed through. It portrayed a scene in just such a place as the plain above had once been, and as I had seen in a number of the other pictures. Tall inclosures rose into the air, with more

lines of openings across them than I could count. Strange birds flew above them, looking stiff and featherless and glittery. If there were people on the ground, they were too small to be seen.

Gently he urged me to the next. Here was a scene among the walls, with people moving about. They looked very like my glen-folk, excepting always for the odd garments they wore, which covered all of their persons but the faces and hands. Even upon their feet they seemed to have garments.

The third picture was terrible. In its ancient much-faded colors it showed many men fighting. Not fighting bears, or cave cats, but other men. Yes, here were dead men, with blood upon their breasts, and others were locked in fierce combat. I turned from this view with a sickness pulling at my belly, and Day-lee felt much the same, for he threw a hairy arm over my shoulders and bent his head sorrowfully even as I.

THE next few pictures were all the same, men slaying one another, often with strange stick-like things, the nature of which I could not imagine. From the attitudes it was plain that when one was pointed at a man, the man died. It was some form of magic, such as an ogre might dream of.

Then we came to a picture which defied my comprehension for many minutes. It was a place of high

walls and inclosures, over which flocks of the curious stiff-winged birds flew; and many of the tallest inclosures were toppling, while fire raged in among them (I knew it was fire by the marvelous crimson and scarlet of the colors, dimmed though they were), and great clouds of smoke rolled out.

There were others. I disliked them, I loathed them, but I could not keep myself from looking intently at each one. It was impressed on me that this was no legend, but a true thing that had happened in the far olden times. These were my people dying, at the hands of others of my people. I could not understand, but I could feel the truth of this thing.

Men slaying men! The legend of Sunset Fields had not lied!

On the second wall there was an enormous picture, full seven paces long and as high as the roof, and this one I could not grasp though I studied it for a long time. It was a place such as this plain—once there must have been many such, in the far olden times—from the center of which there sprouted up a great mushroom, like those in the Fearful Forest, but all creamy-white and so big as to shatter the imagination. I cannot say how huge it was. All our glens and valleys would be hidden in the shadow of such a mushroom. Though I looked at it until my eyes watered, and Dy-lee had to light his third flambeau, still I could not understand

how such a thing could grow in the midst of the tall inclosures.

The next picture I could grasp, however. They were of ruins, like those below which we stood, and all among the ramparts and broken walls were the bodies of men. Some calamity had laid its dreadful hand on the place. I wondered if the giant mushroom had been to blame, wreaking this havoc as it grew.

And now the pictures were different. No more men slaying men, or tall majestic structures spearing the very sky with their tops, but only ruins and blackened plains, raw cliffs and far-flung wastes, the wreckage of great metal things I did not recognize, and among them a few, a very few human figures, prowling like jackal-rats furtively in the chaos. These pictures were all very ancient, with their dye-stuffs flaked and marred by time.

THREE was a view of a prairie, waving with orange grass, on which moved men who might have been my own tribe. Naked, with bows and hatchets, they stalked an animal something like a cave cat, which had a great mane of hair all down its back. I touched this picture and nodded to Dy-lee. He pointed to me. He knew that these were my kindred. And this picture too was older than the oldest man of the glen-folk, for it was much dimmed and discolored.

Down the walls I went, and now

the pictures seemed to be less ancient, and in them I saw a weird change coming over the race of men, for they grew more hairy, and leaving the fields and pleasant glens (why, I wonder?) they appeared to take up their homes in the blighted places and in the caves of the raw red cliffs. Time passed, the pictures were brighter and less flaked, and mankind was furred as a beast, growing little by little to look like my friend, Dy-lee.

This series of pictures I pored over for a long time, going back and forth along the wall, judging the age of each in relation to the others; and I could not apprehend why, but it was true—these men were the same race, but growing shaggier in every succeeding picture. How long was the time gap between the pictures? A generation, a hundred years, a thousand? I could not tell. I went back across the floor to look at the earliest pictures, those in which men fought together. They exuded the aura of an incredible antiquity. And what of those in the other cavern? Their dyes were more brilliant, newer looking; yet the people were dressed in the queer garments that I saw in the oldest portrayals here. Did it mean that there were folk existing even now like them—folk impossible to believe in!—or simply that the dyes in their pictures were better and lasted longer than these? There were many things here that I could not understand, and

I felt small and stupid and as young as the youngest pink rabbit with still-blind eyes.

Dy-lee made a speech then, indicating that I should look at the final pictures; so I left my speculation and came to him and gazed.

HERE, immediately after the series in which mankind grew hairy, was a large square with dyes that were still vivid and clear, though it still seemed quite an ancient picture. It portrayed a number of Dy-lee's folk crouching amid the ruins, perhaps of this very plain above our heads. Their attitudes showed perfectly that they were afraid, for they drew back, with arms about their females and young ones. Then, in a cleared space, there stood a man of my own race, smooth-skinned and wearing the raiment of a guardian, the long fringed black fox pelts hanging from his waist and the short mantle of white hares' skins about his shoulders. He faced away from the cave folk, with his arms lifted in just such a mystical gesture as I had often seen the guardians making; and beyond him, from the edge of an especially well-limned forest, there arose a being whose every line suggested evil—evil beyond the power of words. There was no definite outline to the thing. It appeared to change slightly even while I stared at it, as though the dyes had been mixed with smoke or mist. It seemed to have horns,

and then when I looked again, the horns had vanished. There were great columns of legs, and arms that hung loosely before its chest with an indescribable air of menace. Perhaps there were two sets of arms. I could not tell. It is strange to speak of a picture this way, for after all it was but dyes of many shades laid upon rock; but all I could recall definitely about the evil being, when I had turned away, was that its color was that of a dead fish's belly, and that from its amorphous head there blazed out two terrible eyes of purest lambent flame.

The import of this whole picture was inescapable. Here were the shaggy folk, here was a guardian of my own people, and here was a representation of one of . . .

The Nameless!

FOR long minutes I stared at my new friend Dy-lee, while the thoughts churned in my brain. At last I shook myself, as a bear does on coming out of a cold stream, and I began to try him with questions, partly in gestures and partly in words which I hoped he might understand. First I pointed to the shaggy folk. Yes, they were his people, he signed. Then I indicated the guardian. He pointed at me. I shook my head. Indicating my rough loincloth of cave cat fur, I showed him the rich black and white apparel of the little figure, and then touched my how and quiver, my

hatchet, my knife. No guardian carries a weapon of any sort, as the beasts will never molest one of their craft. Dy-lee seemed to know this, for he nodded vigorously, but then showed me where we were similar—the brown furless face and body. I said, Yes, that this man was of my people, but differing from me in profession. He understood this. I asked him, after several tries, whether he had often seen such men as this; and he signed to me, Yes, that there was a place of meeting on the plain. I then asked if he had thought I was a guardian when he first found me the afternoon before, and he answered, No, pointing to my bow and hatchet.

These folk having no weapons, I was at a loss to know how he had recognized what mine were for; because the instant I had thrown up my how he had seen I meant to shoot, first him and then his tame dogwolves. But after a moment's thought I remembered that in two or three of the old pictures there were depictions of the how and arrow. I went back down the wall and found them. Evidently these people had once known the use of such things, for here they were, rather hairy but not yet covered with the thick shag, stalking a deer with hows. Somewhere in their evolving they had either lost the art or found a better. Here, in a later picture, they were hunting a great knifetooth bear. Ah, that was it; they had domesticated the dog-

wolves, and given up the bow. I imagined that it might have come in handy to protect themselves, for surely they could not always travel amongst a howling pack of their canine friends; but obviously they had discarded it entirely.

I returned to the startling picture of the guardian, and pointing to the horrid figure of The Nameless, I bent my head in pantomime and gave an exaggerated shudder.

Dy-lee repeated my motions exactly, and pointed away to where I imagined they dwelt. He said something, apparently his name for the beings. I said, "The Nameless." Again he shivered—it was a real reaction this time—and pointed east.

EAST? But that was the direction in which lay the Fearful Forest, the three brooks, Sunset Fields, and my own glen. I had not realized this at his first motion, being somewhat confused by the underground cavern. I shook my head, pointing west. *There* dwelt The Nameless.

He would have none of that. No, they lived to the east. I pointed west, he pointed stubbornly west.

But *I* came from the east! If there were such beings in that direction, would I not know it? I tried to tell him this, showing that I came from there; very well, said he in signs, so did the guardians, and I was obviously a relative, a son perhaps, or at least a member

of the tribe of the guardians. Yes, I agreed, but . . .

I gave it up. Could I still be confused by this roof that shut out the sun? Hastily I looked at the last of the pictures, which were scenes of hunting and domesticity, with one more guardian at the end, though not with one of The Nameless; then I signed to him that we should leave the place. He scrambled up to the opening and I followed, the daylight from the high entrance hole of the inclosure above striking my eyes sharply after the torch's flickering gleam. The dogwolves roused themselves and nosed our hands as we came out among the broken stones.

"There!" I said, showing him the west; and, "There!" said he, in his own language, thrusting a dark fury finger eastward. Could we be talking of different things? No, there had been the guardian and the changing figure of horror.

The guardian?

What had a guardian been doing here? And the one picture had been old, but the other fairly recent, or I knew nothing of the manner in which dyes fade with age!

These hairy folk had seen guardians, not once in the dim past, but evidently often, and recently; had not my friend signed to me that there was a place of meeting, out on the blackened plain? No wonder that Dy-lee and his folk, while charmed with my singing and interested in me, had shown no

overwhelming wonder. So the guardians knew, had perhaps always known, that here in the ruins and the raw red cliffs there lived another race of men!

I sat down on a flat rock and puzzled the matter over, beginning with what I conceived the early history of these people — of both our peoples—to have been. A terrible killing among men, with many strange weapons that spread slaughter wholesale, resulting in a leveling of their huge structures and a splitting of the race into two parts, one remaining in places like this, the other going into the distant glens and plains. The folk of the ruins gradually becoming hairy—could it be because nature saw they needed protection for their tender flesh, living as they did in caves? the thought made me open my eyes with my own cleverness! Then the discarding of weapons and the taming of the dogwolves. I wondered if they had thrown away all weapons, or whether they had some secret slaying tool for their defense? Or a magic ointment to rub on their bodies? Or what?

To this point it all seemed clear, and while it was a thing to churn the imagination, still it was a plain and possible happening, not destroying any concepts or deepsunk training of my youth; because no man of my folk knew whence we had come, or anything of our history save that it had always been,

so far as our elders knew, the same as it is now: easy and pleasant, with no enemies save the beasts of prey, and a mate for every man and woman.

But then came the problem of the guardians. These folk knew them too. They passed between us, it was clear, living with us of the glens but visiting these of the caverns. I tried Dy-lee with a question: did he know there were many, many more like me, living beyond the Fearful Forest? I made a mark in the gritty dirt with my knife point, showed him that it stood for myself, then made a great number of similar marks beside it and pointed east. He understood. He could scarcely believe at first, but after a period of astonished grunts and reassurances, he believed. There were many like me, over yonder to the east.

Then something took him with eagerness, so that he nearly burst with what he could not tell me; and at last he ran furiously away to his cave, leaving me to sit with eyes popping till he returned with a hag made of hide. From this he took a number of little bones, hollowed and corked with plugs of wood, and some sticks tipped with carefully-trimmed stiff feathers. Sensing that I would be curious, he handed me one of the bones. I pried out the plug and saw that the hollow was full of a green-blue dye, mixed, as I had suspected, with something to make it stiff

and thick. As I sniffed at it and touched my fingertip to it gingerly, he set to work on the flat stone beside me, dipping his feathered stick into first this bone and then that one, making marks upon the cold rock. I watched the dyes spread and grow into the shape of a man.

Dy-lee, my friend, was a maker of pictures!

I embraced him. I was overcome with his genius. That this animal-looking fellow could himself make the wondrous *peeskies!*

IMPATIENTLY he motioned to me to be seated while he worked. I sat down and, hoping to repay him for the pleasure I took in his craft, I began to sing. He nodded vigorously and chuckled. We were enchanted with each other's accomplishments.

Watching him, I saw the roughly outlined form of a man grow into a tiny likeness of myself, with hunter's loincloth and bow. He prodded me with the stick, quite unnecessarily. I could see that it was Ab-musk there on the flat stone.

Then hastily he made pictures of two others, one of which seemed to be his conception of a female of my race. Hesitantly then, he pointed east.

I told him, Yes, and flickered my fingers to show that there were many of us there. His thatch-shaded eyes blinked with amazement.

The next picture was that of a

guardian, with black and white furs and stern mien. I said the name aloud, and he said something like "rees," which I took to be "guardian" in his tongue.

With this series of pictures to aid us, we could make our queries clear to one another. I asked how many of these guardians he had seen or knew; and he answered, Fifteen or twenty. There being twenty-four guardians living in our glen, I knew that all of them, or nearly all, must at one time or another come here to commune with the hairy folk.

I asked whether they ever lived with his people, and he said, No, that they lived beyond the woods somewhere, he thought perhaps in the sky. I managed to make him understand that they lived among my people, and he seemed surprised that they had never told his folk of us.

Then he made a curious little vague shape beyond his row of pictures, which I could not fathom until he had dyed in two glowing fiery eyes; when I knew that this was meant for one of The Nameless. I asked if he had seen such an ogre, and he signed, No, that no man ever had except the guardians; and that to see them was death.

Then as well as I could I showed him that we knew of these things too, calling them The Nameless. His word for them I could not dominate, though he said it several times.

I wondered how he knew what they looked like, having never seen one; but remembered the picture in the second underground inclosure. Then I thought of the shadowy outlines of that thing, and it occurred to me that this was possibly but a common symbol for the beings, as no man knew their exact form. It was such a picture as a man might make, who knew only that The Nameless were terrible, evil, beyond all thought malignant.

I then asked him whether the guardians protected his people from The Nameless, and he said that they did. I told him by signs that this was their function among us. He did not seem surprised, but again signaled that they had never spoken of me and my tribe, and over this omission he shook his head till the lank hair nearly stood on end.

I told him that we, too, had not known of *them*. He sat with his chin in his pako, biting his lips over this.

I stared at the lightly-dyed portrayal of The Nameless. I pointed to it and to the west.

He laid a hand on my shoulder, as one might to a child when it is making up a wild tale, and pointed eastward.

We sat looking at each other and making these silly gestures back and forth, until in one fearful flash of knowledge it came to me what the truth was.

The taste of this knowledge was at once bitter and sweet to me;

sweet, because it blotted out in an instant the only great fear of all my race; bitter, because it showed me that for many generations both this man's people and my own had been hoodwinked, shamed and overreached by the members of a single useless profession. For it had come to me that now I knew who The Nameless truly were.

Dy-lee was one of The Nameless, and so was Zheena his mate, and great grizzled Dy-veece, and every member of that merry clan with whom I had eaten and slept the night before . . .

Dy-lee was one of The Nameless, and so was—Ahmusk the hustler.

IT must have taken me an hour to tell my friend this terrible, wonderful truth which I had discovered. But finally he realized it, and at first his wrath was dreadful to behold, and then he saw the happiness in it and he danced for joy among his dogwolves.

The simple fact was that for no-one-knew-how-long, the guild of guardians had kept our two races apart and in horror of the things they called The Nameless, for reasons I could not then even begin to guess; had kept us apart by tales of monsters which existed only in their own minds. For the first time in my life I knew pure black hatred of fellow humans. Had I had the guardians there at that moment, I would have slain them all.

Yes, Dy-lee's people were The

Nameless; and my glen-folk were The Nameless to him, under whatever exotic name he called us. Nothing could be plainer, for why else would he think The Nameless lived to the east, while I had been taught they lived in the west?

Now in my rage it came to me why Laq had shot at me in the Fearful Forest, and later had pinked Halfspoor with an arrow to make the bear attack me. He did not dare allow me to make friends here with the hairy folk. It would topple him and his entire crew of liars and rascals. He might have halted me yesterday afternoon with a word, but there was Lora, whom he coveted. He had had a bow, a thing no guardian ever owned—he must long ago have stolen it and some arrows, to practice until he thought himself skilled enough to slay me. It did not seem incredible now that he would plan to kill me for her. Nothing seemed strange in the light of my new discovery. The world was topsy-turvy, and surely all things must be possible to one of his loathsome breed.

After we had stamped about for a while, talking furiously and incomprehensibly to each other and shaking hands with fervor and startling the dogwolves into howling many times, we went up to Dy-lee's cave, where he called in all those of his folk who were nearby, and laying his hand on my chest, he solemnly told them that I was one of those creatures whom they had

all feared for so many years. The turmoil was frightful. Then, before they could flee, he shouted to them what he had discovered. Of course it took much less time than it had when I explained it to him, for he shared his language with them and needed no elaborate signals. You never heard such a roar as went up when he had finished.

It was decided, to be brief, that Dy-lee should accompany me back through the Fearful Forest to the glens, and there we two would confront the guardians and fling their lifetime of lies into their teeth. I gathered also that he would protect me on the journey from wild beasts, though how without weapons he could do this, I did not see. At any rate, he made farewell to Zheena and I shook hands all round and we started out across the ruins, with Dy-lee's two poorts, the tame dogwolves, running before us with their scarlet tongues lolling out and their noses in the air.

As we went toward the Fearful Forest, I struck up a song; and to its rhythm we marched bravely and in high genial comradeship.

THE oppressive woodland closing in upon us, at about the first hour after the zenith of the sun, my song died away on my lips; and we began to converse together, partly in signs and partly in words. Besides those our languages shared, we had learned a number of one another's common words, and now

questions and answers were more readily understood.

I asked him if the guardians had ever seen the pictures which he had shown me. He said that he was not sure, but that he believed not, at any rate not in his lifetime. They never seemed interested in anything except being fed and catered to, and did not spend their nights in the caves as I had done, nor had they ever sung to the hairy folk. I gathered that Dy-lee had shown me the pictures out of gratitude for the delight he had taken in my songs. It was the first time I had ever gotten anything for my voice except a kick in the rump. I was exceedingly pleased.

Then he put to me a number of questions about my people, and as well as I could I answered them. We discovered another mutual word, which was "thorn," when I pried one from his foot with my knife.

Then I thought of weapons, and showing him my metal blade, I asked if he had not seen such things before. He examined it—I think he had wanted to for hours, but was too polite to ask for it—and said that such a knife was unheard of. I had already noticed the flint daggers his people used, which were flaked to make a cutting edge of a sort, but were really sharp only at the tip. My bow and arrows and my hatchet he had seen in his "ancient" pictures, but mine were the first he had ever handled. His bands

were clumsy on them, and I should have hated to let him loose a shaft anywhere in my vicinity.

By signs and a few phrases I told him how we heat and mold the metal for our few needs, and he was intrigued but a little skeptical. Did he never hear of heating metal to make anything? No, he said, never.

BUT surely he knew of metal? Yes, he said, there were metal instruments in use among his folk, but these had always been in existence, and no man living knew the trick of making them. Then he brought out from some hidden pouch or repository under the long hair on his side a thing like a bright bronze bone, a small tube of metal with a hole at each end, curiously shaped and carved with tiny marks that made no sense, for they did not seem to be pictures or designs of anything at all. With this, he told me, as I examined it, he would protect me if animals should attack us; but when I asked him, How, he only smiled and laughed to himself. I presumed he meant to surprise me, and did not press him for details; which must have made him feel rather disappointed, for he put away the tube with a snort.

And these, I asked then, were the only weapons his folk had? Yes, he said, they needed no others. But if he should lose his? There were others, many others, hidden in the caves. But in time, I said, surely all of the mysterious instruments

would he gone, some lost, others destroyed by accident; and then what would his people do? For they could not make others, that was obvious.

Well, I could not make him understand this query. He did not seem to be able to visualize the distant future in the slightest degree. There had always been the tubes, and so far as he knew, there always would be the tubes.

I gave it up, and privately decided that I would make him and Dy-veese, and some of the other males, learn the rudiments of archery, whether they liked it or not.

We tramped on, and the Fearful Forest depressed us with its grim dark trees and lack of sunlight, until at last we spoke no more to each other, but traveled as silently as the two great dogwolves. And so it was that we came upon Halfspoor where he sat in a glade feeding on the body of a jackal-rat, and did not warn him of our coming until we stood face to face with him across some twenty paces of the rotting carpet of vegetation.

Halfspoor gazed at us, and we, paralyzed, gazed upon Halfspoor; and he gave a grunt and a bellow, and leaping to his hind feet he came charging down at us.

I sent one arrow into his chest before I turned to dash back down the trail. I had it in mind to get amongst the trees before I fought, for here there was nowhere to dodge, and dodging was my only defense

against the giant brute. Dy-lee was fumbling at his side, and the dogwolves were leaping toward the knifetooth bear. I shouted to Dy-lee to seek cover, though I knew he would not understand the words. I saw a man in pelts of black and white moving furtively from the path some hundred feet behind us, and I knew that a guardian had been following us eastward. Then something took me across the shoulder blades with a slap like a tree falling, and I was hurled six times my own length into a patch of stabbing briars.

EVEN as I lit I was scrambling sideways, intent on reaching the other side of the nearest tree; a hundred thorns were ripping my flesh, and my back felt as though it were half broken. My ears were throbbing, I supposed from the jolt of Halfspoor's blow. I tore myself out of the briars, leaped with a pounce like a cave cat's across an open space and took up a position of belligerent waiting behind a lichen-wrapped trunk.

Halfspoor, had he followed me up at once, could have slashed me apart before ever I got out of the clutch of the thorn bushes. He had stopped, however, on the spot where he had slapped me, and was hovering over Dy-lee making angry swipes at him. I thought for a moment that Dy-lee was dead or unconscious, for he was huddled down in a dark mass at the bear's feet.

The dogwolves were harrying Halfspoor, one snapping at his legs, the other leaping to get at his throat. I made a grab over my shoulder and discovered that the quiver was empty. My arrows had been scattered on the ground when I flew into the briars.

As the bear was not even looking my way, I ran into the open to get a shaft or two. I would have attacked him with my hatchet, but since the vital spots of his skull and neck were a good twelve feet off the ground, it would have been a futile and stupid gesture.

An arrow discovered, I drew back the cord and sank another shaft in the bear's massive chest. Even as I shot I realized that something was singular indeed. Although Halfspoor towered over Dy-lee, who crouched unprotected on the earth, and though the blow was cutting in his direction, yet the blows were missing Dy-lee by several feet at the least. All that the bear need do was take one step forward on those gigantic pads and bend his back a trifle . . . and there would be no more Dy-lee. But that step and that bend he did not seem able to accomplish! Like a fox caught in a trap, he swayed and screamed his fury, but did not touch my friend Dy-lee.

When my arrow struck, he turned toward me and gave a hawh of horrible anger. Even as I snatched up the only other arrow I could see and darted for my tree, I caught

a glimpse of Dy-lee jumping to his feet, evidently unhurt. The dogwolves hampered Halfspoor, and I made the tree a second before the old devil reached it.

HE came round it after me, and I dodged about to keep it between us, taunting him loudly. This was a game at which I was past master. I could dive and scuttle all afternoon, if need be.

Then with horror I saw that Dy-lee was coming toward us. I bawled at him to go back—he would not know the words, but surely my frantic motions could not be misunderstood—and then in desperation stood my ground and shot my bolt at Halfspoor at a range of about five feet. It was the third one to flesh itself in the barrel of his chest, but I doubted that any of the three would prove mortal. Ribs and iron-hard muscles would stop them from penetrating too deeply.

Dropping like a stone, I then bounded straight between his charging legs; was struck glancingly by one hind paw and whirled over and over in the rotten humus. My hatchet found its way by old instinct into my hand as I rolled. Then I leaped to my toes and — collided with Dy-lee!

Memory of that instant is muddled. I know that I almost struck my friend down before I realized who he was. I saw Halfspoor in a kind of bloody haze, seeming to fill the world above us. Then Dy-

Lee put a hand to his mouth and the great bear fell back a pace, snarling and swatting the air. My head rang and I realized that there was blood in my eyes. I wiped them clear and lifted the hatchet as I backed away. The hairy man gripped my wrist and would not let me leave his side. I thought that he had gone mad, and tugged at him frantically. But he stood rock-firm, with one hand holding me steady and the other at his mouth.

All this took but a second or two, and then I ceased to struggle and only stared at our terrible ursine foe. Halfspoor stood just out of reach, and his actions were brainless, idiotic. He would slash at us viciously, missing us by a foot or so; slap at the side of his head with blows that would have split open a less solid skull; then back up a little, moan, bellow, gnash his tusks, make as if to charge at us—and beat his head again!

I glanced at Dy-lee, who seemed calm and detached. The glint of the bronze tube caught my eye. It was in his mouth and he was blowing into it. I thought of the wooden whistles we make for our children; but there came no noise out of this instrument. My head was, indeed, ringing and pounding from the fight; yet I knew I was not deaf, for Halfspoor was raising the dead with his uproar and I could hear that very well.

It was hardly the time for investigation of mysteries, however.

Impatiently I pulled at Dy-lee's arm. The bear would charge. Dy-lee grinned (at least the hair on his cheeks moved as though he had grinned), and throwing back his shoulders and inflating his lungs, appeared to blow a tremendous gust of wind through the metal tube. The dogwolves, who had been snapping at Halfspoor's toes, writhed on their bellies and screeched piteously together, as if they had been disembowled. Magic! The poor brutes seemed in their last agony.

THE knifetooth bear gave one frightful, indignant, stentorian yell, which echoed weirdly from every tree around the glade. He administered a final pummeling to the sides of his tormented head. And he turned and made off into the forest as if all the cave cats in the world were nipping at his tail!

At the same time my eardrums were assailed by the most piercing *feel* of noise that they had ever experienced. And yet there was no sound from the tube in Dy-lee's mouth.

Now he removed it, stowed it in his secret pouch, laughed quietly to himself, and walking across the mold, bent down and began to gentle the growling dogwolves. Slowly they responded, sitting up, nuzzling his hands, and whining as if ashamed of their recent performance.

Listening with one ear while rubbing the other, I heard old Halfspoor smashing his way through

the woodland, complaining bitterly to himself in a loud voice. I could not blame him. If the stalwart dog-wolves were reduced to impotence by the sorcery of Dy-lee's tube, even hruin must be pardoned for running from it.

And then I heard a cry of pain and terror, a human sound that rose and wailed and died to a hideous moaning; and without hesitation I ran off on the bear's trail. He had found someone else in his mad career, and that one had not escaped by magic!

It was easy to see where he had passed. Thickets were crushed, even small trees shattered off, and the bark of the giants shredded by angry clawings. Perhaps I went two hundred yards. Then I found the man, where Halfspoor had found him and snatched him up and flung him aside, broken and dying, into a heap of touchwood.

It was the guardian Laq, and he was dying if ever I saw a man die, with a broken back and a leg that bent sideways in a way no leg was ever meant to bend. I knelt beside him and he opened his eyes and recognized me, and he spat feebly, for there was still hate in the man. I could do nothing for him, could not even straighten his limbs or ease his head, for motion would have slain him.

"Lie easy, Laq," I said. "You must rest a while, and then I will help you home."

"When I have rested, I will slay

you, Ahmusk the hunter," said he with a curse. His hand moved feebly, and I saw he wished to pull the bow closer, the bow that he had stolen and practiced with until he thought he was skilled enough to murder me. I put it into his fingers, noticing without much surprise that it was one which I had made and believed I had lost somewhere. I gave him one of the arrows from his quiver, too, and that was a mistake, for he stared sharply at me with his flaming dark eyes. "You think I am crippled," he said huskily, "but I will show you when I have rested, Ahmusk. Lora will never come to your platform and your mating furs."

I said nothing, for one cannot grow angry with a dying man, and there was no kind word that my tongue could lay hold on; and so presently he began to talk in a quiet, sane voice.

"Of course I cannot let you live. You harped the land of the shaggy people, and made friends with them; and you have a knowledge which must never be given to our tribes. Men must have something to fear. It keeps them decent."

I do not know, even yet, whether he believed what he said; and I have often pondered on it. Perhaps he had made himself believe it, for the peace of his soul.

"The legend of The Nameless goes on," he said, the bright froth dripping from his lips. "Ahmusk

dies . . . My father was a guardian. He preached to me that some dreadful calamity would occur if we allowed the two races to come together. All the guardians were taught that. It was dinned into them from their birth. Only the intelligent ones saw what that calamity would be. Our craft would lose its privilege, its honor, its reason for being."

It was the same thought I had held. The guardians fattened on adulation, and if that was taken from them, there would be nothing left, for they were so accustomed to it that they could not conceive becoming as other men.

"It does no harm to tell you these things, Ahmusk, for you will shortly die. Yes . . . you understand, I saw very early that the basic ideas of my craft were wrong, all wrong. There was no harm in letting you know of the shaggy people, for they are as innocent and affectionate as you; the harm lay in the breaking-up of our guild, and the . . ." He was silent for so long that I thought he had lapsed into insensibility, but after a while he repeated what he had said about mankind needing something to fear. He used the same words, as though it were an excuse he had learnt by rote long ago.

"That is an untruth," I said. "Fear is evil, fear of anything is all wrong. It is wickedness, Laq."

HE looked up at me, and I think the naked truth came to his

lips then, and would not be denied; for he said, with a horrid gasp, "Ah, but the reverence given us, Bear-throat! This is not lightly to be lost. Think of it! In all the world we alone are above mankind. A hunter is the same as a singer, the night watcher gains no more thanks, no more prerogatives than the weaver of garlands. Only the guardian walks clothed in honor and mystic glory! Do you think I can let you smash us to the level of common clay, after so many generations of being exalted?"

He stopped again, and I thought of the first of his breed, those early guardians who must have arisen after the terrible slaughters, when all was hatred and terror and confusion. Did they then invent the legend of The Nameless, to capitalize on the mutual fear of the two peoples? Did they, perhaps, force the hairy folk into the wastes and caves, looking ahead to a reign of vicious knowledge over ignorance? And were all their descendants as cynical and utterly selfish as this Laq?

"What of your brothers?" I asked him. "Do they know that no true harm would come if the people knew the truth of The Nameless?"

He laughed, horribly. "My fellow guardians are in the main sublimely unaware of their futility," he said. "The dogmatic teachings of bigoted fathers have made unthinking sons . . . You understand, Ahmusk, that I will slay you when

I have rested."

"Yes, Laq," I said, as he lay dying.

"Ah, but how I would love to see their bubble of self-importance pricked!" he muttered. Evidently he felt no kinship with them, but sneered at them and us alike. "How they would flounder if the facts were forced upon them!"

I heard Dy-lee come up behind us, and the dogwolves snuffed at my shoulders. Laq raised himself with a superhuman effort and cried, "The bear! The knifetooth bear! Ahmusk, the bear comes! My whistle . . . my whistle! I cannot find my whistle . . ." and so died, his fingers clutching weakly at the broken bow that he had stolen so long ago, when he first plotted to kill me for the sake of Lora.

I took the arrows from his quiver, and covered Laq with branches and dead leaves, for I had no strength to bury him. Returning to the glade, we managed to find the three arrows I had lost in the fight; then we turned our faces eastward once more.

We crossed the Crimson Brook and the Blue, and then at last we began to talk with our signs and our halting phrases.

"What is the tube?" I asked Dy-lee. "How did it drive off Half-spoor?"

As well as he could, he showed me. It was a whistle, of a sort, and though we men could not hear its

note, he explained that the animals could. A low sound, made by barely breathing into it, brought the dogwolves barking happily to our sides; but a stronger puff caused them to howl dolefully. I had seen what a really powerful blast on it could do to even a knifetooth bear.

"And the guardians have these whistles?" I asked him, and he answered, Yes, they did, though Laq must have lost his. That was why they needed no weapons when they strode the Fearful Forest. A man would not have to slay a carnivore when he could chase it away in fright, with its ears splitting.

And yet, all I sensed when Dy-lee blew the thing was a tingling of the eardrums. Strange and new! That an animal could bear a sound which a man could not!

But still I thought a bow and a few good arrows were not to be sneered at, and resolved again to teach my friends their use, in preparation for the time, even though it be hundreds of years hence, when all the whistles shall be lost.

I pictured Halfspoor in my mind, and how he had stood off from Dy-lee and swung blows at the air when the whistle blew. I saw him run again, cuffing his own ears to beat away the tearing, bone-rending sound of the to-me-silent tube. What a host of miracles I had to tell to Lora!

We crossed the Gray Brook and came to Sunset Fields, and the sun was less than an hour from its

setting in the west. There was a figure running toward us, now in the waning sunlight, now in the dappling shade of the tree ferns. I cried out joyfully, for it was my Lora.

She neared us, and seeing Dy-lee and the dogwolves, cried out with horror. "Ahmusk! Fly, or they will slay you!"

"Come here, little fearful one," I said, "and I will open your mind to a thousand new things!"

SHE stood there, regarding me, and the fear went out of her eyes, to be replaced by a vast relief. "Then this creature will not harm you?"

"Nor you either. This is my friend Dy-lee," I told her, and taking her hand, put it into his. He shook it, and she smiled uncertainly. "Ahmusk—the dogwolves?"

I patted the biggest on the head. Oh, but that was my hour! "I have made them gentle as fawns," I said, stretching the facts somewhat.

Then she knew that all was well, and she leaped into my arms and kissed me until I thought she would never be done; and yet truly I was sorry when she stopped. "What has happened, Bear-throat? Where have you been for two days, and who is this, and how does it come that the dogwolves do not bite, and why are you all blood-smeared, and—?"

"Lora, Lora," I said, "I have a thousand things to tell you, but

we can never begin on them if you must chatter endlessly—"

"And Halfspoor, did you find his track, and where will he spend the night, and—?"

"Lora!" I shouted, enfolding her in a fierce embrace. "Listen to me, and I shall tell you! Great Halfspoor ranges the Fearful Forest, where I will meet him again one day. This is Dy-lee—"

"And what is Dy-lee?" she asked, her voice rather muffled against my chest.

I gave up. "I will tell you one thing," I said, "and then I will let you babble until you run out of queries. I am like a man who has feared lightning all his life, and has now been struck; and I not only survive, but have found it a pleasant experience—"

"Where were you hit by lightning? Where did you get all the thorn scratches?" she asked.

Dy-lee put his hand on my shoulder and said, pointing to Lora, "Zheenai! Zheenai!"

By which I think he meant to say that females are all alike, and so, patting my girl on her shining head, I grinned across at him and replied, "How right you are, Dy-lee, how very right you are!"

"What did he say?" asked Lora.

"He said that there is nothing in all the fine green world like a woman."

"Well!" said she, "you've learnt

a little wisdom in your traveling, I must say!"

"A little," said I, "a little."

And so we journeyed homeward to the glen and our people, we three good new companions, and the dog-wolves went before us and gamboled with pleasure in the soft grass of the fields.

THAT night Dy-lee and I sat together on my platform, in the tawny-cream light of a full autumn moon. Much had been told that evening, at a council of all our glen-folk; much had been speculated, much had been argued over. Some men had been shocked, some elated, some hurt—those last were the guardians, most of whom could not believe my tale until I showed them Dy-lee and repeated what Laq had said as he lay dying. My shaggy comrade had dyed a picture for the folk on a big rock, and astonished them all beyond measure. Our finest singers had performed for him, and now he knew that Bear-throat was not such a marvelous being after all.

Lora and I had announced our mating time. I had three days in which to find a cave cat and make our rug. Yes, a cave cat; I had decided to give Halispoor a rest for a while . . .

After the initial surprise of Dy-lee's appearance, our people had all become very much interested in him. He was laden with gifts to take home to the caves: bone tools and hat-

chets, metal knives, fine arrows and bows, skins of white deer and sleek owl feathers, everything they could think of which he might like.

So now we sat together on the platform of my tree, our legs covered with rugs against the chill of the night, and our eyelids drooping with fatigue. Yet must I chatter a while longer, being reluctant to see this glorious day end.

"Dy-lee," I said, "many wanings of the moon will pass before we see an end to the changes that are going to happen among our folk, yours and mine. We will all be one folk soon." He nodded and smiled, just as though he could understand me. "We have been kept a simple people, naive and guileless; and that may be good, I think it is, and I think we will not change our simplicity. We will only see things more plainly. And there will be less fear."

"Ahmusk," said Dy-lee. "Friend Ahmusk!"

I gripped his hand in the gesture I found so satisfying. "And with time, Dy-lee, we will find the answers to all sorts of questions, questions that intrigue me so that I can scarcely wait till morning to begin searching for the answers! Those whistles of yours, for instance—who made them, and how, and is the secret of them truly that their noise pierces the ears and maddens an animal with fear, or what?"

"And your pictures, Dy-lee, and our music; we will trade these to

each other and spend a thousand thousand contented hours with them!"

He yawned, and lying down, pulled the furs up to his chin. Still would I talk a few moments longer.

"And some day, Dy-lee, we will know what caused your folk to grow all shaggy, while we remained smooth-skinned. Maybe we will find out how the men of the far olden times moved their great stones, and why they made the tall inclosures.

"First of all, of course, we must learn to speak to one another. I shall learn your language, and you shall learn mine . . . "

"But," put in a grumbling voice from the next tree, "if you do not close your mouth and go to sleep,

Bear-throat, I fear you will not live to see tomorrow's sun, and so will miss all the fun. Go to sleep!"

I chuckled. It was Lora's father. "Good-night, then," I said. "I shall wake you early in the morning."

"I'm sure you will. Good-night!"

I rolled over beside Dy-lee and composed myself in my furs for the night. At once a vast comfortable weariness came over me.

"Perhaps," I murmured, "perhaps we shall even discover some day why it is that the bones of Sunset Fields do not decay!"

Dy-lee answered me with a soft grunt and then a snore. I laughed to myself with happiness, and fell asleep in the light of the full tawny moon.

Egyptian

A short while ago, readers were smothered in an avalanche of historical novels about ancient Egypt, but none is more graphic and entertaining than WALTERS'S *The Egyptian*. This absorbing novel, tracing the career of a royal Egyptian surgeon, brings to life a period almost more unbelievable than the most extravagant fantasy or science-fiction.

In particular, the section of the novel which discusses the extra-ordinary Egyptian "Houses of the Dead," is extremely fascinating. You are taken into one of these buildings in magnificent Thebes and you are given a striking picture of the Egyptian care of the dead, a matter of more importance to them than the care of the living. The amazing embalming techniques and anointments are perfectly pictured.

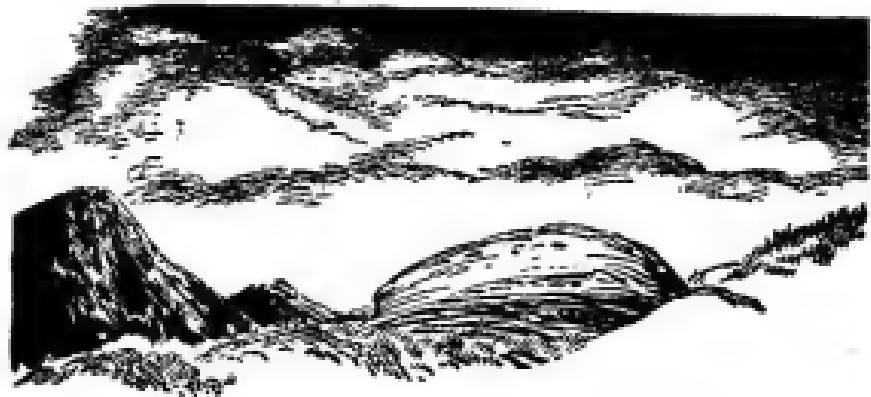
But a sense of horror seizes you when the stench of the place infests your nostrils and when you

Charnel

realise that the embalmers were frequently criminals and worse. An Egyptian Charnel House would make an abattoir seem like a rose garden.

The rich color of ancient Egypt and its customs is ever freshly fascinating. The Egyptian gods were chosen with imagination, imagination exceeding in fertility of invention and device, the early Greeks. The very names, Horus, Ra, Thothmes, Set, Atem, and Osiris conjure up in the mind a lavish picture of opulent worship. Anyone who has seen photographs of the Egyptian temples at Karnak can get a picture of the impressive and forbidding grandeur of the Egyptian religion.

Fantasiasts who have laid their scenes in ancient Egypt knew what they were doing. There is a ready-made atmosphere of utterly weird culture as far from us as we are from Mars. Peer into Egypt if you would see another world!



"IN THIS SIGN . . ."

By Ray Bradbury

The Fathers had come to Mars to cleanse it of sin. But where were the Martians? And what were these strange globes of pale blue fire? . . .

FIRE exploded over summer night lawns. You saw sparkling faces of uncles and aunts. Skyrockets fell up in the brown shining eyes of cousins on the porch, and the cold charred sticks thumped down in dry meadows far away.

The Most Reverend Father Joseph Daniel Peregrine opened his eyes. What a dream; he and his cousins with their fiery play at his grandfather's ancient Ohio home so many years ago!

He lay listening to the great hollow of the church, the other cells where other Fathers lay. Had they,

too, on the eve of the flight of the rocket *Crucifix*, lain with memories of the Fourth of July? Yes. This was like those breathless Independence dawns when you waited for the first concussion and rushed out on the dewy sidewalks, your hands full of loud miracles.

So here they were, the Episcopal Fathers, in the breathing dawn before they pinwheeled off to Mars, leaving their incense through the velvet cathedral of space,

"Should we go at all?" whispered Father Peregrine. "Shouldn't we solve our own sins on Earth? Are



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n't we running from our lives here?"

He rose, his fleshy body, with its rich look of strawberries, milk, and steak, moving heavily.

"Or is it sloth?" he wondered. "Do I dread the journey?"

He stepped into the needle-spray shower.

"But I shall take you to Mars, body." He addressed himself. "Leav-

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ing old sins here. And on to Mars to find new sins?" A delightful thought, almost. Sins no one had ever thought of. Oh, he himself had written a little book: THE PROBLEM OF SIN ON OTHER WORLDS, ignored as somehow not serious enough by his Episcopal brethren.

Only last night, over a final cigar, he and Father Stone had talked of it.

"On Mars, sin might appear as virtue. We must guard against virtuous acts there that, later, might be found to be sins!" said Father Peregrine, beaming. "How exciting. It's been centuries since so much adventure has accompanied the prospect of being a missionary!"

"I will recognize sin," said Father Stone, bluntly, "even on Mars."

"Oh, we priests pride ourselves on being litmus paper, changing color in sin's presence," retorted Father Peregrine, "but what if Martian chemistry is such we do not color at all? If there are new senses on Mars, you must admit the possibility of unrecognizable sin."

"If there is no malice aforethought, there is no sin or punishment for same, the Lord assures us that," Father Stone replied.

"On Earth, yes. But perhaps a Martian sin might inform the subconscious of its evil, telepathically, leaving the conscious mind of man free to act, seemingly without malice! What then?"

"What could there be in the way

of new sins?"

FATHER Peregrine leaned heavily forward. "Adam alone did not sin. Add Eve and you add temptation. Add a second man and you make adultery possible. With the addition of sex or people, you add sin. If men were armless they could not strangle with their hands. You would not have that particular sin of murder. Add arms, and you add the possibility of a new violence. Amoebas cannot sin because they reproduce by fission. They do not covet wives or murder each other. Add sex to amoebas, and arms and legs, and you would have murder and adultery. Add an arm or leg or person, or take away each, and you add or subtract possible evil. On Mars, what if there are five new senses, organs, invisible limbs we can't conceive of, then mightn't there be five new sins?"

Father Stone gasped. "I think you enjoy this sort of thing!"

"I keep my mind alive, Father, just alive, is all."

"Your mind's always juggling, isn't it; mirrors, torches, plates?"

"Yes. Because sometimes the Church seems like those posed circus tableaux where the curtain lifts and men, white, zinc-oxide, talcum-power statues, freeze to represent abstract Beauty. Very wonderful. But I hope there will always be room for me to dart about between the statues, don't you, Father Stone?"

Father Stone had moved away. "I think we'd better go to bed. In a few hours we'll be jumping up to see your new sins, Father Peregrine."

THE rocket stood ready for the firing.

The Fathers walked from their devotions in the chilly morning, many a fine priest from New York or Chicago or Los Angeles — the Church was sending its best — walking across town to the frosty field. Walking, Father Peregrine remembered the Bishop's words:

"Father Peregrine, you will captain the missionaries, with Father Stone at your side. Having chosen you for this serious task, I find my reasons deplorably obscure, Father, but your pamphlet on planetary sin did not go unread. You are a flexible man. And Mary is like that uncleaned closet we have neglected for milleniums. Sin has collected there like bric-a-brac. Mars is twice Earth's age and has had double the number of Saturday nights, liquor baths, and eye-poppings at women as naked as white seals. When we open that closet door, things will fall on us. We need a quick, flexible man, one whose mind can dodge. Anyone a little too dogmatic might break in two. I feel you'll be resiliant, Father, the job is yours."

The Bishop and the Fathers knelt.

The blessing was said and the rocket given a little shower of holy water. Arising, the bishop addressed

them:

"I know you will go with God, to prepare the Martians for the reception of His Truth. I wish you all a *thoughtful* journey."

They filed past the Bishop, twenty men, robes whispering, to deliver their hands into his kind hands before passing into the cleansed projectile.

"I wonder," said Father Peregrine, at the last moment, "if Mars is hell? Only waiting for our arrival before it bursts into brimstone and fire."

"Lord, be with us," said Father Stone.

The rocket moved.

COMING out of space was like coming out of the most beautiful cathedral they had ever seen. Touching Mars was like touching the ordinary pavement outside the church five minutes after having really known your love for God.

The Fathers stepped gingerly from the steaming rocket and knelt upon Martian sand while Father Peregrine gave thanks.

"Lord, we thank Thee for the journey through Thy rooms. And Lord, we have reached a new land, so we must have new eyes. We shall hear new sounds and must needs have new ears. And there will be new sins, for which we ask the gift of better and firmer and purer hearts. Amen."

They arose.

And here was Mars like a sea

under which they trudged in the guise of submarine biologists, seeking life. Here the territory of hidden sin. Oh, how carefully they must all balance, like grey feathers, in this new element, afraid that walking *itself* might be sinful; or breathing, or simple fasting!

And here was the Mayor of First Town come to meet them with outstretched hand. "What can I do for you, Father Peregrine?"

"We'd like to know about the Martians. For only if we know about them, can we plan our church intelligently. Are they ten feet tall? We will build large doors. Are their skins blue or red or green? We must know when we put human figures in the stained glass, so we may use the right skin color. Are they heavy? We will build sturdy seats for them."

"Father," said the Mayor, "I don't think you should worry about the Martians. There are two races. One of them is pretty well dead. A few are in hiding. And the second race, well, they're not quite human."

"Oh?" Father Peregrine's heart quickened.

"They're round luminous globes of light, Father, living in those hills. Man or beast, who can say, but they act intelligently, I hear." The Mayor shrugged. "Of course, they're not men, so I don't think you'll care—"

"On the contrary," said Father Peregrine swiftly. "Intelligent, you say?"

"**T**HERE'S a story. A prospector broke his leg in those hills, and would have died there. The blue spheres of light came at him. When he woke, he was down on a highway, and didn't know how he got there."

"Drunk," said Father Stone.

"That's the story," said the Mayor. "Father Peregrine, with most of the Martians dead, and only these Blue Spheres, I frankly think you'd be better off in First City. Mars is opening up. It's a frontier now, like in the old days on Earth, out west, and in Alaska. Men are pouring up here. There are a couple thousand black Irish mechanics and miners and day-laborers in First City who need saving, because there are too many wicked women who came with them, and too much ten century old Martian wine—"

Father Peregrine was gazing into the soft blue hills.

Father Stone cleared his throat. "Well, Father?"

Father Peregrine did not hear. "Spheres of blue fire?"

"Yes, Father."

"Ah." Father Peregrine sighed.

"Blue balloons," Father Stone shook his head. "A circus!"

Father Peregrine felt his wrists pounding. He saw the little frontier town with raw, fresh-built sin, and he saw the hills, old with the oldest and yet perhaps an even newer, to him, sin.

"Mayor . . . could your black Irish laborers cook one more day

in hellfire?"

"I'd turn and haste them for you, Father."

Father Peregrine nodded to the hills. "Then, that's where we'll go."

There was a murmur from everyone.

"It would be so simple," explained Father Peregrine, "to go into town. I prefer to think that if the Lord walked here and people said, 'Here is the beaten path.' He would reply, 'Show me the weeds. I will make a path.'"

"But—"

"Father Stone, think how it would weigh upon us if we passed sinners by and did not extend our hands."

"But globes of fire!"

"I imagine man looked funny to other animals when he first appeared. Yet he has a soul, for all his homeliness. Until we prove otherwise, let us assume that these fiery spheres have souls."

"All right," agreed the Mayor, "but you'll be back to town."

"We'll see. First, some breakfast. Then you and I, Father Stone, will walk alone into the hills. I don't want to frighten those fiery Martians with machines or crowds. Shall we have breakfast?"

The Fathers ate in silence.

AT nightfall, Father Peregrine and Father Stone were high in the hills. They stopped and sat upon a rock to enjoy a moment of relaxation and waiting. The Martians had

not as yet appeared and they both felt vaguely disappointed.

"I wonder—" Father Peregrine mopped his face. "Do you think if we called 'Hello!' they might answer?"

"Father Peregrine, won't you ever be serious?"

"Not until the good Lord is. Oh, don't look so terribly shocked, please. The Lord is not serious. In fact, it is a little hard to know just what else He is except loving. And love has to do with humor, doesn't it? For you cannot love someone unless you put up with him, can you? And you cannot put up with someone constantly unless you can laugh at him, isn't that true? And certainly we are ridiculous little animals wallowing in the fudge-bowl, and God must love us all the more because we appeal to his humor."

"I never thought of God as humorous," said Father Stone, coldly.

"The Creator of the platypus, the camel, the ostrich, and Man? Oh, come now!" Father Peregrine laughed.

But at this instant, from among the twilight hills, like a series of blue lamps lit to guide their way, came the Martians.

Father Stone saw them first. "Look!"

Father Peregrine turned and the laughter stopped in his mouth.

The round blue globes of fire hovered among the twinkling stars, distantly trembling.

"Monsters!" Father Stone leaped

up. But Father Peregrine caught him. "Wait!"

"We should've gone to town!"

"No, listen, look!" pleaded Father Peregrine.

"I'm afraid!"

"Don't be, this is God's work!"

"The devil's!"

"No, now, quiet!" Father Peregrine gentled him and they crouched with the soft blue light on their upturned faces as the fiery orbs drew near.

AND again, Independence Night, I thought Father Peregrine, trembling. He felt like a child back in those July Fourth evenings, the sky blowing apart, breaking into powdery stars and burning sound, the concussions jingling house windows like the ice on a thousand thin ponds. The aunts, uncles, cousins crying Ah! as to some celestial physician. The summer sky colors. And the Fire Balloons, lit by an indulgent Grandfather, steadied in his massively tender hands. Oh, the memory of those lovely Fire Balloons, softly lighted, warmly hollowed bits of tissue, like insect wings, lying like folded wasps in boxes and, best of all, after the day of riot and fury, at long last from their boxes, delicately unfolded, blue, red, white, patriotic, the Fire Balloons!

He saw the dim faces of dear relatives long dead and mantled with moss as Grandfather lit the tiny candle and let the warm air breathe up to form the balloon

plumply luminous in his hands, a shining vision which they held, reluctant to let it go, for once released it was yet another year gone from life, another Fourth, another bit of Beauty vanished. And then up, up, still up through the warm summer night constellations, the Fire Balloons had drifted, while red-white-and-blue eyes followed them, wordless, from family porches. Away into deep Illinois country, over night rivers and sleeping mansions the Fire Balloons dwindled, forever gone . . .

Father Peregrine felt tears in his eyes. Above him, the Martians, not one but a thousand whispering Fire Balloons it seemed. Any moment, he might find his long dead and blessed Grandfather at his elbow, staring up at Beauty.

But it was Father Stome.

"Let's go, please, Father!"

"I must speak to them." Father Peregrine rustled forward, not knowing what to say, for what had he ever said to the Fire Balloons of time past, except with his mind: *you are beautiful, you are beautiful*, and that was not enough now. He could only lift his heavy arms and call upward, as he had often wished to call after the enchanted Fire Balloons, "Hello!"

But the fiery spheres only burnt like images in a dark mirror. They seemed fixed, gaseous, miraculous, forever.

"We come with God," said Father Peregrine to the sky.

"Silly, silly, silly." Father Stone chewed the back of his hand. "In the name of God, Father Peregrine, stop!"

But now the phosphorescent spheres blew away into the hills. In a moment, they were gone.

FATHER Peregrine called again, and the echo of his last cry shook the hills above. Turning, he saw an avalanche shake out dust, pause, and then with a thunder of stone wheels, crash down the mountain upon them.

"Look what you've done!" cried Father Stone.

Father Peregrine was almost fascinated, then horrified. He turned, knowing they could run only a few feet before the rocks crushed them into ruins. He had time to whisper, *Oh, Lord!* and the rocks fell!

"Father!"

They were separated like chaff from wheat. There was a blue shimmering of globes, a shift of cold stars, a roar, and then they stood upon a ledge two hundred feet away watching the spot where their bodies should have been buried under tons of stone.

The blue light evaporated.

The two Fathers clutched each other. "What happened?"

"The blue fires lifted us!"

"We ran, *that* was it!"

"No, the globes saved us."

"They couldn't!"

"They did."

The sky was empty. There was

a feel as if a great bell had just stopped tolling. Reverberations lingered in their teeth and marrows.

"Let's get away from here. You'll have us killed."

"I haven't feared death for a good many years, Father Stone."

"We've proved nothing. Those blue lights ran off at the first cry. It's useless."

"No." Father Peregrine was confused with a stubborn wonder. "Somehow, they saved us. That proves they have souls."

"It proves only that they *might* have saved us. Everything was confused. We might have escaped, ourselves."

"They are not animals, Father Stone. Animals do not save lives; especially of strangers. There is mercy and compassion here. Perhaps, tomorrow, we may prove more."

"Prove what? How?" Father Stone was immensely tired now, the outrage to his mind and body showed on his stiff face. "Follow them in helicopters, reading chapter and verse? They're not human. They haven't eyes or ears or bodies like ours."

"But I feel something about them," replied Father Peregrine. "I know a great revelation is at hand. They saved us. They *think*. They had a choice, let us live or die. That proves free will!"

FATHER Stone set to work building a fire, glaring at the

sticks in his hands, choking on the grey smoke. "I myself, will open a convent for nursing geese, a monastery for salted swine, and I shall build a miniature apse in a microscope so that paramecium can attend services and tell their heads with their flagella."

"Oh, Father Stone."

"I'm sorry." Father Stone blinked redly across the fire. "But this is like blessing a crocodile before he chews you up. You're risking the entire missionary expedition. We belong in First Town, washing liquor from men's throats and perfume off their hands!"

"Can't you recognize the human in the inhuman?"

"I'd much rather recognize the inhuman in the human."

"But if I prove these things sin, know sin, know a moral life, have free will and intellect, Father Stone?"

"That will take much convincing."

The night grew rapidly cold and they peered into the fire to find their wildest thoughts, while eating biscuits and berries, and soon they were bundled for sleep under the chiming stars. And just before turning over one last time, Father Stone, who had been thinking for many minutes to find something to bother Father Peregrine about, stared into the soft pink charcoal bed and said, "No Adam and Eve on Mars. No original sin. Maybe the Martians live in a state of God's grace. Then

we can go back down to town and start work on the Earth men."

Father Peregrine reminded himself to say a little prayer for Father Stone. "Yes, Father Stone, but there've been an Original Sin and a Martian Adam and Eve. We'll find them. Men are men, unfortunately, no matter what their shape, and inclined to sin."

But Father Stone was pretending sleep.

Father Peregrine did not shut his eyes.

Of course they couldn't let these Martians go to hell, could they? With a compromise to their consciences, could they go back to the new colonial towns, those towns so full of sinful gullets and women with scintilla eyes and white oyster bodies rollicking in beds with lonely laborers? Wasn't that the place for the Fathers? Wasn't this trek into the hills merely a personal whim? Was he really thinking of God's Church, or was he quenching the thirst of a sponge-like curiosity? Those blue round globes of St. Anthony's fire. How they burned in his mind! What a challenge, to find the man behind the mask, the human behind the inhuman. Wouldn't he be proud if he could say, even to his secret self, that he had converted a rolling huge pool table full of fiery spheres! What a sin of pride! Worth doing penance for! But then one did many prideful things out of Love, and he loved the Lord so much and was so hap-

py at it that he wanted every one else to be happy, too.

The last thing he saw before sleep was the return of the blue fires, like a flight of burning angels silently singing him to his worried rest.

THE blue round dreams were still there in the sky when Father Peregrine awoke in the early morning.

Father Stone slept like a stiff bundle, quietly. Father Peregrine watched the Martians floating and watching him. They were human, he knew it. But he must prove it or face a dry-mouthed, dry-eyed Bishop telling him kindly to step aside.

But how to prove humanity if they hid in the high vaults of the sky? How to bring them nearer and provide answers to the many questions?

"They saved us from the avalanche."

Father Peregrine arose, moved off among the rocks, and began to climb the nearest hill, until he came to a place where a cliff dropped sheerly to a floor two hundred feet below. He was choking from the vigorous climb in the frosty air. He stood, getting his breath.

"If I fell from here, it would surely kill me."

He let a pebble drop. Moments later, it clicked on the rocks, below.

"The Lord would never forgive

me . . . "

He tossed another pebble.

"It wouldn't be suicide, would it, if I did it out of Love . . . ?"

He lifted his gaze to the blue spheres. "But first, another try." He called to them. "Hello, hello!"

The echoes tumbled upon each other, but the blue fires did not blink or move.

He talked to them for five minutes. When he stopped, he peered and saw Father Stone, still indignantly asleep, below in the little camp.

"I must prove everything." Father Peregrine stepped to the cliff rim. "I am an old man. I am not afraid. Surely the Lord will understand that I am doing this for Him?"

He drew a deep breath. All his life swam through his eyes and he thought, in a moment, shall I die? I am afraid that I love living much too much. But I love other things more.

And thinking thus, he stepped off the cliff.

He fell.

"Fool!" he cried. He tumbled end over end. "You were wrong!" The rocks rushed up at him and he saw himself dashed on them and sent to glory. "Why did I do this thing?" But he knew the answer and an instant later was calm as he fell. The wind roared around him and the rocks hurtled to meet him.

AND then there was a shift of stars, a glimmering of blue light

and he felt himself surrounded by blueness and suspended. A moment later he was deposited, with a gentle bump, upon the rocks, where he sat a full moment, alive, and touching himself and looking up at those blue lights that had withdrawn instantly.

"You saved me!" he whispered. "You wouldn't let me die. You knew it was wrong."

He rushed over to Father Stone who still lay quietly asleep. "Father, Father, wake up!" He shook at him and brought him around. "Father, they saved me!"

"Who saved you?" Father Stone blinked and sat up.

Father Peregrine related his experience.

"A dream, a nightmare, go back to sleep," said Father Stone, irritably. "You and your circus balloons."

"But I was awake!"

"Now, now, Father, calm yourself, there now."

"You don't believe me? Have you a gun, yes, there, let me have it."

"What are you going to do?" Father Stone handed over the small pistol they had brought along for protection against snakes or other similar and unpredictable animals.

Father Peregrine seized the pistol. "I'll prove it!"

He pointed the pistol at his own hand and fired.

"Stop!"

There was a shimmer of light and before their eyes, the bullet stood upon the air, poised an inch from his open palm. It hung for a moment,

surrounded by a blue phosphorescence. Then it fell, hissing, into the dust.

Father Peregrine fired the gun three times, at his hand, at his leg, at his body. The three bullets hovered, glittering, and like dead insects, fell at their feet.

"You see?" said Father Peregrine, letting his arm fall, and allowing the pistol to drop after the bullets. "They know. They understand. They are not animals. They think and judge and live in a moral climate. What animal would save me from myself like this? There is no animal would do that. Only another man, Father. Now, do you believe?"

Father Stone was watching the sky and the blue lights, and now, silently, he dropped to one knee and picked up the warm bullets and cupped them in his hand. He closed his hand tight.

The sun was rising behind them.

"I think we had better go down to the others and tell them of this and bring them back up here," said Father Peregrine.

By the time the sun was up, they were well on their way back to the rocket.

FATHER Peregrine drew the round circle in the center of the blackboard.

"This is Christ, the son of the Father."

He pretended not to bear the other Fathers' sharp intake of breath.

"This is Christ, in all his Glory," he continued.

"It looks like a geometry problem" observed Father Stone.

"A fortunate comparison, for we deal with symbols here. Christ is no less Christ, you must admit, in being represented by a circle or a square. For centuries the cross has symbolized his love and agony. So, this circle will be the Martian Christ. This is how we shall bring Him to Mars."

The fathers stirred fretfully and looked at each other.

"You, brother Mathias, will create, in glass, a replica of this circle, a globe, filled with bright fire. It will stand upon the altar."

"A cheap magic trick," muttered Father Stone.

Father Peregrine went on patiently. "On the contrary. We are giving them God in an understandable image. If Christ had come to us on Earth as an octopus, would we have accepted him readily?" He spread his hands. "Was it then a cheap magic trick of the Lord's to bring us Christ through Jesus in man's shape? After we bless the church we build here and sanctify its altar and this symbol, do you think Christ would refuse to inhabit the shape before us? You know in your hearts he would not refuse."

"But the body of a soulless animal!" said Brother Mathias.

"We've already gone over that, many times since we returned this morning, Brother Mathias. These

creatures saved us from the avalanche. They realized that self-destruction was sinful, and prevented it, time after time. Therefore we must build a church in the hills, live with them, to find their own special ways of sinning, the alien ways, and help them."

The Fathers did not seem cheered at the prospect.

"Is it because they are so odd to the eye?" wondered Father Peregrine. "But what is a shape? Only a cup for the blazing soul that God provides us all. If tomorrow I found that sea-lions suddenly possessed free will, intellect, knew when not to sin, knew what life was and tempered justice with mercy and life with love, then I would build an undersea cathedral. And if the sparrows should miraculously, with God's will, gain everlasting souls tomorrow, I would freight a church with helium and take after them, for all souls, in the shape, if they have free will and are aware of their sins, will burn in hell unless given their rightful communions. I would not let a Martian sphere burn in hell, either, for it is a sphere only in mine eyes. When I close my eyes it stands before me, an intelligence, a love, a soul, and I must not deny it."

"But that glass globe you wish placed on the altar," protested Father Stone.

"CONSIDER the Chinese," replied Father Peregrine, im-

perturbably. "What sort of Christ do Christian Chinese worship? An Oriental Christ, naturally. You've all seen Oriental Nativity scenes. How is Christ dressed? In Eastern robes. Where does he walk? In Chinese settings of bamboo and misty mountain and crooked tree. His eyelids taper, his cheekbones rise. Each country, each race adds something to our Lord. I am reminded of the Virgin of Guadalupe, to whom all Mexico pays its love. Her skin? Have you noticed the paintings of her? A dark skin, like that of her worshippers. Is this blasphemy? Not at all. It is not logical that men should accept a God, no matter how real, of another color. I often wonder why our missionaries do well in Africa, with a snow-white Christ. Perhaps because white is a sacred color, in albino, or any other form, to the African tribes. Given time, mightn't Christ darken there, too? The form does not matter. Content is everything. We cannot expect these Martians to accept an alien form. We shall give them Christ in their own image."

"There's a flaw in your reasoning, Father," said Father Stone. "Won't the Martians suspect us of hypocrisy? They will realize that we don't worship a round, globular Christ, but a man with limbs and a head. How do we explain the difference?"

"By showing there is none. Christ will fill any vessel that is offered. Bodies or globes, he is there, and

each will worship the same thing in a different guise. What is more, we must believe in this globe we give the Martians. We must believe in a shape which is meaningless to us as to form. This spheroid will be Christ. And we must remember that we ourselves, and the shape of our Earth Christ, would be meaningless, ridiculous, a squander of material to these Martians."

Father Peregrine laid aside his chalk. "Now, let us go into the hills and build our church."

The Fathers began to pack their equipment.

THE church was not a church but an area cleared of rocks, a plateau on one of the low mountains, its soil smoothed and brushed, and an altar established whereon Brother Mathias placed the fiery globe he had constructed.

At the end of six days of work, the "church" was ready.

"What shall we do with this?" Father Stone tapped an iron bell they had brought along. "What does a bell mean to them?"

"I imagine I brought it for our own comfort," admitted Father Peregrine. "We need a few familiarities. This church seems so little like a church. And we feel somewhat absurd here, even I, for it is something new, this business of converting the creatures of another world. I feel like a ridiculous play-actor at times. And then I pray to God to lend me strength."

"Many of the Fathers are unhappy. Some of them joke about all this Father Peregrine."

"I know. We'll put this bell in a small tower for their comfort, anyway."

"What about the organ?"

"We'll play it at the first service, tomorrow."

"But, the Martians—"

"I know. But again, I suppose, for our own comfort, our own music. Later, we may discover theirs."

They arose very early on Sunday morning and moved through the coldness like pale phantoms, rime tinkling on their habits; covered with chimes they were, shaking down showers of silver water.

"I wonder if it is Sunday here on Mars?" mused Father Peregrine, but seeing Father Stone wince, hastened on, "It might be Tuesday or Thursday, who knows? But no matter. My idle fancy. Its Sunday to us. Come."

The Fathers walked into the flat wide area of the "church" and knelt, shivering, and blue-lipped.

FAATHER Peregrine said a little prayer and put his cold fingers to the organ keys. The music went up like a flight of pretty birds. He touched the keys like a man moving his hands among the weeds of a wild garden, startling up great soarings of beauty into the hills.

The music calmed the air. It smelled the fresh smell of morning. The music drifted into the

mountains and shook down mineral powders in a dusty rain.

The Fathers waited.

"Well, Father Peregrine." Father Stone eyed the empty sky where the sun was rising, furnace-red. "I don't see our friends."

"Let me try again." Father Peregrine was perspiring.

He built an architecture of Bach, stone by exquisite stone, raising a music cathedral so vast that its furthest chancels were in Ninevah, its furthest dome at St. Peter's left hand. The music stayed and did not crash in ruin when it was over, but partook of a series of white clouds and was carried away among other lands.

The sky was still empty.

"They'll come!" But Father Peregrine felt the panic in his chest, very small, growing. "Let us pray. Let us ask them to come. They read minds; they know."

The Fathers lowered themselves yet again, in rustlings and whispers. They prayed.

And to the East, out of the icy mountains of seven o'clock on Sunday morning or perhaps Thursday morning or maybe Monday morning on Mars, came the soft fiery globes.

They hovered and sank and filled the area around the shivering priests. "Thank you, oh thank you, Lord." Father Peregrine shut his eyes tight and played the music and when it was done he turned and gazed upon his wondrous congregation.

And a voice touched his mind, and the voice said:

"We have come for a little while."

"You may stay," said Father Peregrine.

"For a little while only," said the voice, quietly. "We have come to tell you certain things. We should have spoken sooner. But we had hoped that you might go on your way if left alone."

Father Peregrine started to speak, but the voice hushed him.

"We are the Old Ones," the voice said, and it entered him like a blue, gaseous flare and burned in the chambers of his head. "We are the old Martians, who left our marble cities and went into the hills, forsaking the material life we had lived. So very long ago we became these things that we now are. Once, we were men, with bodies and legs and arms such as yours. The legend has it that one of us, a good man, discovered a way to free man's soul and intellect, to cholies, of deaths and transfigurations, of ill humors and sensilities, and so we took on the look of light-free him of bodily ills and melan-ning and blue fire and have lived in the winds and skies and hills forever after that, neither prideful nor arrogant, neither rich nor poor, passionate or cold. We have lived apart from those we left behind, those other men of this world, and how we came to be has been forgotten, the process lost, but we

shall never die, nor do harm. We have put away the sins of the body and live in God's grace. We covet no other property, we have no property, we do not steal, nor kill, nor lust, nor hate. We live in happiness. We cannot reproduce, we do not eat or drink or make war. All the sensualities and childishnesses and sins of the body were stripped away when our bodies were put aside. We have left sin behind, Father Peregrine, and it is burned like the leaves in the autumn wicker and it is gone like the soiled snow of an evil winter, and it is gone like the sexual flowers of a red and yellow spring, and it is gone like the panting nights of hottest summer, and our season is temperate and our clime is rich in thought."

FATHER Peregrine was standing now, for the voice touched him at such a pitch that it almost shook him from his senses. It was an ecstasy and a fire washing through him.

"We wish to tell you that we appreciate your building this place for us, but we have no need for it, for each of us is a temple unto himself, and needs no place wherein to cleanse ourselves. Forgive us for not coming to you sooner, but we are separate and apart and have talked to no one for ten thousand years, nor have we interfered in any way with the life of this planet. It has come into your mind now that

we are the lillies of the field, we tell not, neither do we spin. You are right. And so we suggest that you take the parts of this temple into your own new cities and there cleanse them. For, rest assured, we are happy and at peace."

The Fathers were on their knees in the vast blue light, and Father Peregrine was down, too, and they were weeping, and it did not matter that their time had been wasted, it did not matter to them at all.

The blue spheres murmured and began to rise once more, on a breath of cool air.

"May I—" cried Father Peregrine, not daring to ask, eyes closed. "May I come again, some day, that I may learn from you?"

The blue fires blazed. The air trembled.

Yes. Some day he might come again. Some day.

And then the Fire Balloons blew away and were gone, and he was like a child, on his knees, tears streaming from his eyes, crying to himself, Come back! Come back! and at any moment Grandfather might lift him and carry him upstairs to his bedroom in a long-gone Ohio town . . .

THEY filed down out of the hills at sunset. Looking back, Father Peregrine saw the blue fires burning. No, he thought, we couldn't build a church for the likes of you. You're Beauty itself. What church could compete with the fireworks of the pure soul?

Father Stone moved in silence beside him. And at last he spoke:

"The way I see it is there's a Truth on every planet. All parts of the Big Truth. On a certain day they'll all fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw. This has been a shaking experience. I'll never doubt again, Father Peregrine. For this Truth here is as true as Earth's Truth, and they lie side by side. And we'll go on to other worlds, adding the sum of the parts of the Truth until one day the whole Total will stand before us like the light of a new day."

"That's a lot, coming from you, Father Stone."

"I'm sorry now, in a way, we're going down to the town to handle our own kind. Those blue lights now, when they settled about us, and that voice." Father Stone shivered.

Father Peregrine reached out to take the other's arm. They walked together.

"And you know," said Father Stone, finally, fixing his eyes on Brother Mathias who strode ahead with the glass sphere tenderly carried in his arms, that glass sphere with the blue phosphorous light glowing forever inside it, "you know, Father Peregrine, that globe there

—?"

"Yes?"

"It's Him! It is Him, after all."

Father Peregrine smiled and they walked down out of the hills toward the new town.

THE END



THE LONGSNOZZLE EVENT

By Hal Annas

As the greatest detective in the galaxy,
Len Zitts could easily arrest the murderer. His
main interest was in analyzing the weapon used!



LEN Zitts wiggled his big toe and gently pressed it against the velvet-covered button, and the couch on which he was lying began easing from beneath the desk to shape itself into a lounging chair. In the process, a pair of mechanical arms slipped a pair of flexible plastic moccasins on his feet and another pair of arms buttoned his shirt collar and straightened his maroon cravat. At the same time a mechanical comb and brush straightened the part in his thick chestnut hair and smoothed it neatly.

Rising from behind the desk to a sitting position, without any ef-

fort on his part, Len Zitts blinked brown eyes and looked again at the vision of blonde loveliness which stood with full mouth agape just inside the doorway.

"Oh!" The slender woman drew a deep breath, causing her bosom to swell alluringly. "You scared me. Popping up like a jack-in-the-box!"

Moving his little finger an eighth of an inch, Zitts touched a button on the arm of the chair and a mechanical hand put a cigaret in his mouth and another tubelike arm moved beneath the cigaret and squirted flame against its tip. "Sit

down," Zitts invited. "Have a cigaret," He pressed another button and an arm on the far side of the desk extended a tray of assorted cigarets toward the woman.

A little breathless, she sat down and smoothed her diaphanous cerise skirt along her thighs. "I—I'm still a little scared," she said tremulously.

Zitts arched a chestnut brown eyebrow, significantly glanced at the desk and the mechanical equipment, and said, "Don't be alarmed. Just a few little inventions of my own. Desks were originally intended as a resting place for the feet. I've merely modernized the idea. Slip under the desk to relax. People can't spill drinks and ashes down your collar while you sleep."

The woman nodded, smiled, revealing even teeth and a wide mouth with upturned corners. "I suppose you want me to tell you why I came?"

Zitts shook his head almost imperceptibly. "I know why you came," he said. "You want to offer me a ton of gold to investigate your husband's death. Sorry! Afraid we can't do business."

"B-but — but — how did you know?" The woman leaned forward and lifted a slender hand and looked at it as though to test her eyes.

ZITTS eyed the round arm with interest. "Elementary," he said. "People are always wanting me to investigate something, and

they always try to palm off that trash called gold. They never offer anything worthwhile, such as a dozen genuine bacteria for my collection, or a scuttle of coal—that almost priceless black stuff from which so many things are made. Ever seen any coal?"

The woman shook her head, swinging the shoulder-length blonde hair from side to side, and her deep blue eyes opened wide in wonder. "Heard of it. Glossy ebony substance of which ornaments are made. A princess on Mars is said to own a chunk of it as big as my thumb, set in a pendant. It was captured in the Martian war with Saturn."

"It's probably a phony," Zitts pointed out. "The Martians are too smart to let a woman wear that precious stuff. A piece that big could be made into the nucleus of a webbing which would trap enough sunlight and moisture from the orbit of Mars to turn every sandy plain on that planet into fertile land."

The subject seemed beyond the grasp of the woman. "But you haven't told me," she said softly, "how you knew it was my husband's death, not something else."

Zitts turned slightly in his chair. The turning itself seemed to serve as a signal. The door on his right opened noiselessly and a dusky Venusian female glided into the room, came and sat down on a seat which was remarkably like a man's knee.

"My confidential secretary," Zitts said by way of introduction. "Miss

Xuren Clausrinkelwickwellopiandus-selkuck. I streamline that a bit and call her Zoo. Zoo, this is Mrs. Elmer-Brown Jake-Smith."

"What?" The blonde woman's eyes snapped from Zoo to Zitts. "How did you know my name? And how did you know I had two husbands?"

"One husband," Zitts corrected. "Mr. Jake Smith was done to death in some mysterious manner yesterday morning at daylight just as he was going to bed for the day. But you're still entitled to both names, having been legally wed to both men. The beyondlaws, I believe, are holding Elmer Brown."

"Beyondlaws? Isn't that an outmoded term? Its meaning has slipped me."

"Outmoded, yes, but still appropriate. Coined to replace the term congressmen. They once made the laws, I believe, but they were beyond the laws themselves. Then the people got stirred up and demoted them to ratcatchers and put responsible men in their places. They worked up from ratcatchers to jobs then known as policemen. The term ratcatchers stuck, but it seems more dignified to call them beyondlaws. These people are holding your other husband, leaving you husbandless. But that shouldn't be so bad. With your shape you ought to be able to snare a hundred husbands."

THE woman dropped her eyes and blushed. "You shouldn't

flatter a poor widow at a time like this," she said coyly. "But how do you know all these things about me?"

Zitts turned to the Venusian. "Show her, Zoo," he said.

Zoo uncrossed her graceful legs and leaned forward on the mechanical knee.

"Why," the blonde woman broke in, "does she sit on a thing like that? It—it's so suggestive of sitting on a man's lap."

Zitts smiled indulgently. "Miss Clausrinkelwickwellopiandus-selkuck," he said, "attended an old-fashioned secretarial school. The reason for their training to sit on a man's lap is lost in antiquity. But I have a feeling there was a good reason for it. In the twentieth century when bandits stalked the cities, when detectives were popping in and out of every second doorway in pursuit of murderers, and wiping off fingerprints in their wake, it is to be presumed that a man and his secretary undertook many things of a confidential nature. As a preliminary to such confidential things, a session of lap-sitting might've been just the thing. Of course we'll never know for certain. But it is an honored custom in the old schools, and, of course, we cannot go against the dignity of the past."

"Now, with your permission, I'll have Zoo go ahead."

The woman nodded assent and the Venusian girl touched a lever on the side of the desk which Zitts

could not reach without stretching. Instantly a round white globe, lighted by a faint yellow glow at its center, rose out of an opening in the desk. The blonde woman, sitting close, drew back with a gasp.

"That's me," she said. "Inside the globe."

"Of course," Zitts cocked an eyebrow at Zoo who pointed at the vision. "Notice closely," Zitts went on. "Right there at the tip of Zoo's claws. You are standing on the moving carpet in a lower corridor of this building. As I lay beneath this desk I was looking into that globe which was then visible below. It is now reproducing exactly what I saw."

THE woman had somewhat recovered her poise and now leaned close and watched herself glide along the corridor on the moving carpet. "But I still don't see—" she began.

"You will when I explain," Zitts informed her. "Look closely at your features. They are beautiful!"

"Yes. But—"

"It has been known for centuries," Zitts declared, "that every thought has a physical reaction. Sometimes it is only glandular. But it is a short step from observing the reactions to reading the thoughts. The reactions, of course, differ in different people. It would be necessary to catalogue your reactions before I could specifically read your every thought. But certain key reactions are fairly common, such as grief,

fear, love, hate. In a glance you can tell whether a person is grieving, fearing, loving, hating. A study of reactions advances this talent remarkably. A little intelligent deduction, judgment, putting of two-and-two together, and it is possible to come fairly close to what anyone is thinking without knowing the catalogued reactions. Am I making myself clear?"

"Go on," the woman urged with interest. "But don't read my exact thoughts. I wouldn't want anyone to do that."

"I probably haven't the language to read your exact thoughts," Zitts assured her. "Shall I tell you how I knew your purpose in coming here?"

"By all means."

"Look closely at the vision. It is smiling serenely to itself. That's you a few minutes before you entered this office. That pleased expression means you have just conceived a bright idea, probably thinking you could palm off a ton of gold on me."

"But I never—"

"Observe there where Zoo's claws are pointing. A man approaches. Now look at your own face. You have suddenly remembered that one of your husbands is dead and the other is in the hands of the rat-catchers, and you are supposed to register sorrow. You do but it's feigned. Your thoughts are more on the way the man is staring at your figure. Watch! Now you're sway-

ing your hips gracefully. Very nice! Now look! The man has passed you, glanced back once to see if you are still waving your hips, and gone on. You are no longer waving your shape. You're thoughtful again. Oh, oh! You've turned on the waves again. Another man must be approaching. There he is, sure enough. That's why you're blinking your eyes now, to call attention to your long lashes. That will stop as soon as he passes, but your hips will wave a trifle more until you're certain he's out of range."

"Stop! Stop this minute," the blonde cried. "You're just making up all that."

ZITTS shrugged. "My dear Mrs. Brown and Smith, if you do not care to know how I learned of the purpose of your visit here, it is quite all right with me. No charge whatever for this interview. Zoo will show you to the corridor."

"B-but—but I do. But you don't have to go into all of a woman's secrets."

"Secrets?" Zitts lifted his hand a trifle, then let it fall, which inadvertently plunged the room into darkness and caused a grim voice to growl, "Don't move! I'll burn you in your tracks!" He corrected this at once, reassured the woman and briefly explained: "I often interview desperate characters in this room, Martians, Saturnians and even politicians. Have to protect myself."

"What were you saying about secrets?" the woman prodded with curiosity which had not evolved very much in ten thousand years.

"Secrets?" Zitts repeated. "I wonder! Most actions and reactions are as obvious as the thoughts behind them. Secrets? I sometimes doubt there is such a thing. Shall I tell you what you are thinking now?"

The woman blushed, shook her head. "Please don't. I'll try not to wish I could claw your eyes out anymore. Just go ahead and investigate my husband's death."

Zitts rolled his eyes and looked at Zoo without moving. Zoo put her arms around the back of her seat, which slightly resembled a man, kissed it lightly and leaped nimbly to her feet. She glided smoothly to a corner, her figure undulating gracefully, and set in motion a four-wheeled machine which rolled to the center of the room and paused. Panels began to slide back from the machine, revealing its insides. Meanwhile Zitts explained:

"The news of your second best husband's death was on televiword," he said. "I was interested in the case purely from an academic standpoint. With the machine you see on your left I watched the ratcatchers tearing up your apartment. The machine is called a key-skeleton. There isn't another like it in our solar system. With this key-skeleton I can enter any apartment or domicile no matter how well it is locked. Not in the flesh, no. That

would be far too much trouble. I simply bring your apartment into this room. Not materially, but three-dimensionally to all effect. I have already gone over your apartment thoroughly and can describe the man who killed your husband."

THE woman's curving mouth popped open. "Why don't you tell the ratcatchers?" she wanted to know.

Zitts shrugged. "I haven't the evidence to prove my theory. Besides, there is another phase of the case in which I am interested. The weapon which killed your husband was a strange, unearthly thing. Nothing like it is known to modern science. It is a hand weapon with a tube about six inches in length. Behind this tube is a six-chambered cylinder which appears to revolve when certain mechanisms are set in motion. Inscribed on it in ancient lettering is this legend: *Colt*. It is not known how this weapon works nor which end of it destroys. But the ratcatchers are going to experiment with it, and when they asked my advice I suggested that they hold the tube end of it toward their bodies. That seems the most harmless part of it. I also suggested that they line up behind one another when they do this, and stay away from the butt end of it. I expect to learn the results soon. Zoo! Turn on the machine."

Just as the machine was turned on a loud bang sounded in the room,

and the woman gasped as the view lit up and showed four uniformed ratcatchers sprawled on the floor of what was obviously the ratcatchers' lair. Zitts snorted in disgust.

"Zoo!" he called. "Get in touch with the chief rat of the ratcatchers and tell him I said those men have clearly ignored my advice. Tell him I said to caution the next men who experiment with that weapon. Tell him to see that they hold the tube next to their bodies, and tell him for the sake of safety to have six men line up behind one another. Better yet, he had better undertake the experiment himself. His men are careless. Like idiots they have been pointing the tube away from themselves and holding the butt near their bodies. Turn off the machine. The sight of those dead men and the smell of blood is offensive."

Zitts sat in gloomy silence until the woman spoke again. "Then you'll bring the murderer to justice?" she ventured quietly.

Zitts shook his head. "I'm interested in the weapon, not the murderer. Such a weapon is far beyond our science. We have only rays which kill without noise. That weapon makes a terrific bang. Seems far more fitting than silence, especially in murders resulting from hate. We might in another hundred years be able to duplicate it and put them on the market and sell them literally to millions who have a right to expect some entertain-

ment as well as wind from their politicians. When a fellow felt in an ill humor he could destroy a politician with that weapon. The bang of it would immediately cheer him up."

THE woman leaned across the desk and tears came into her eyes. "If you don't catch the man who killed my almost best husband," she sobbed brokenly, "I won't be able to get married more than a couple more times. Suspicion would fall on me and I don't know but two men who would marry a murderer."

Zitts softened somewhat. "And if I do catch the murderer?" he said.

The woman brightened, blew her nose and brushed away the tears. "I'll be the happiest person in our galaxy," she said, smiling. "I can marry six men tomorrow and probably twelve or fourteen the next day. You don't know how wonderful it will be to have so many husbands that the loss of a few now and then won't matter."

Zitts nodded sympathetically. "I can well understand," he said. "But you shouldn't expect me to use my training and intelligence for nothing. After all, I have ninety-six wives to support—partially—that is. Their other husbands contribute a bit now and then."

"I could give you a uranium mine," the woman offered.

"Uranium? Nonsense. It's used only to flush sewers when they get

gummed up. Haven't you anything valuable?"

"Platinum."

Zitts shook his head. "Used for ballast in deep-sea diving and then dumped in the ocean. Have you any humorous writings, such as an ancient Congressional Record?"

"Never heard of anything like that," the woman replied. "Heard once there was some sort of record of congress which was destroyed because so many people died laughing over it."

"Exactly! Very dangerous," Zitts went on. "But I could trade it to the Martians to use in their war against Jupiter. Even a Jovian, who can endure so many more gravities than we, couldn't endure the weight of a Congressional Record. And if he could, he would either die laughing or become an epileptic. Have you got one?"

"No!" The woman shook her head sadly. "I have a private atmosphere-runabout, a house with seventeen rooms in Florida, a ranch in California with ten thousand domesticated descendants of movie stars grazing on it, a plantation on Venus where I keep a herd of poets, a million acres of arable land on Uranus, a crater on the moon, and a chunk of what's left of the ice at the North Pole. But I have nothing whatever valuable."

"No property on Mars?"

"A single canal, but it's worthless. It's filled with billions and billions of barrels of oil. Have tried

to give it away, but no one is fool enough to take it."

"**H**an with pity and understanding. "There should be some sort of charity to aid people in your poverty-ridden condition. I suppose I'll have to handle the case for nothing. I wouldn't do it for anybody else for less than a star of the sixth magnitude, but I do not believe in imposing on the poor."

"I have a nickel in ancient money," the woman said softly.

"What? A nickel? Good God, woman! For half of that I would solve every murder since the beginning of time and commit some of my own. Give me that nickel. Where did you get it? Don't you know there are people who would cut ten thousand throats for a sum like that?"

"I—I didn't know it was valuable."

"It's priceless! People will sell their souls, commit perjury, betray their friends, cheat their neighbors, buy and sell votes, and even do some good things for money."

"But such a little piece—"

"Woman, you have no idea of values. Since money has become replaced by credit and barter, such pieces as this have become invaluable collectors' items. Even before that it was valuable. You could buy a lead dime with it. And if you were clever enough you could use the lead dime to buy a tin half-dollar.

Then you could change the half-dollar into wooden quarters and begin all over again. A shrewd man could amass a fortune in counterfeit dollars by such trading. Of course, he couldn't buy anything with the counterfeit dollars, but reflection on the trading would strengthen his mind while he rested behind bars. At least that's the way history relates it. Zoo! Take this precious nickel, handle it carefully and with due reverence, seal it in a tube, send it through the pneumatic to the armored transport, have them place a hundred men armed to the teeth about it, and escort it solemnly and without undue ostentation to the Universal Bank, that institution which covers eight square miles and towers ten thousand feet into the air, and deposit it with proper ceremony to my account. I shall be the wealthiest man on this planet and the envy of every creature in the galaxy. But don't worry, Mrs. Brown and Smith! I shall not overcharge you. You have two cents change coming, a tidy sum—nay a fortune—and your case is as good as solved. Zoo! Sound the alarm. We go into action at once."

BELLS clanged, a siren screamed, a series of red lights flashed on and off and on and off, and a distant rumble shook the building. The blonde woman caught her breath, gripped the arms of her chair to steady herself, waited until the noise and the shaking had sub-

sided, then asked, "Do you always go into action like that?"

"Invariably," Zitts affirmed serenely. "Seismographs all over the world register when Len Zitts launches himself in pursuit of a criminal, and the underworld trembles in despair. But," he added a trifle wistfully, "it doesn't register on Mars and Venus and they never send reporters and photographers. I'm thinking of installing a heavier vibrator, Zoo! You may inform the inquirers who will be hounding you in a moment that the nemesis of crime has plunged forth to strike death and terror to the heart of criminals. You may elaborate that a bit. Mention my towering figure, nearly five feet tall, and the bulging muscles which back up my eighty-six pounds of weight. You may also speak of my handsome features, but not in a manner to attract more than a few thousand women. I have enough wives already. Now! Clear the deck! Here we go."

The blonde woman gathered her small feet under her, preparing to leap out of the way, and she took a deep breath for fear all of the air would be sucked out of the room in the wake of his rush; but to her astonishment he merely slumped down in the chair and, to all appearance, went to sleep.

"He's in action now," Zoo explained softly and musically. "Concentrating. He'll come up with a plan in ten seconds."

THE prophecy proved true. Zitts opened his eyes with a start, rose an inch in the chair and winked three times at the Venusian girl. Instantly the girl sprang to the door on the right and swung it open, and a four-legged creature, with its tongue lolling out, waddled into the room and squatted on its haunches.

"See!" Zoo cried in delight. "His plans always begin with Pupsie. The ancients called him a bloodhound. His species is almost extinct, but he's smart and he claims his ancestors pursued criminals thousands of years ago."

"Claims?" the blonde woman exclaimed, aghast. "You mean, that four-legged creature can talk?"

"Whaddya think?" said Pupsie. "Living generation after generation around windbags who did nothing but talk, wasn't it to be expected that dogs would eventually evolve to that stage themselves? Not that it is an improvement, mind you. Dogs had to learn in self-defense. Even back in the twentieth century hundreds of people everyday were asking questions of animals, 'Ain't oo the pretty little thing?' 'Does oo want a tiss, oo lovey doveys?' The first words my ancestors learned to speak in answer to such questions were 'Go to hell!' The meaning of the phrase is lost in our modern language, possibly because my ancestors overworked it, using it every time a human opened his mouth to ask a question of an animal, until at length it had no meaning what-

ever?"

"And you catch criminals?"

"Catch anything," said Pupsie, "that I can smell, if it deserves catching."

"Quiet!" Zitts roared, displaying his customary impatience when another usurped the floor. "Zoo! Fetch forth the Longsnozzle. And while you're at it you can bracket this case as 'The Longsnozzle Event.' Mark that word 'Event!' I have a suspicion this is an insignificant case with not more than eight or ten murders involved."

"Eight or ten murders!" The blonde woman became deathly pale. "You mean, there is more than one murder?"

ZITTS looked at the woman with pity in his brown eyes. "Woman, you evidently do not understand the psychology of murder. One always leads to another. It's always been that way. Look at the murder stories of even the blind age of the twentieth century! Thirteen murders, ordinarily, on the first page. Seven on the second, and the balance strung out through the book. It is the aspiration of every collector to find a book with only one murder in it. Personally, for such a work I would offer seventy-five interstellar giant transports each loaded to bursting with ton upon ton of diamonds, emeralds, pearls, sapphires, oyster shells, and even those rare gems called kidney stones that come from the galaxies of in-

terspace—and, yes, even those magnificent broke-stones found only in a single planetary system in a galaxy on the very rim of outer space. These latter are practically untouchable, and the more you try to touch them the more broke-stone they become."

Zitts drew a deep breath and went on: "If a solitary genius of the latter half of the twentieth century had had the godlike stature to create a work with only one murder in it, instead of dozens, he would be immortal and today worshipped by the protagonists of moderation and hated by the antagonists who maintain, and not without reason, that all of the characters in such stories, and especially the detective, should come to a violent and horrible end on page three."

The blonde woman wiped her eyes, glanced into a small mirror and tried to compose herself. "Very well," she murmured half to herself. "I shall prepare myself to endure whatever I must and view as many murders as necessary."

"It won't be bad at all," Zitts assured her with feeling. "May even be boring, with so few murders. Personally, I rarely take a case which doesn't offer the prospect of at least a hundred. They generally murder my suspects one after another, and for that reason I try to suspect as many as possible to keep the case interesting."

"Now, if you are prepared—"

The woman, fearful but dry-eyed, nodded in response.

"Pupsie! On your mark! Zoo! Switch on the machine."

In fear and wonderment the woman watched Pupsie don the longsnozzle which appeared to be a mechanical nose two-feet in length with its other measurements in proportion. This extra nose did not appear heavy or to handicap Pupsie in any way. Its nostrils flared and the Venusian girl produced some six square yards of white linen, held it significantly at the proper place, and the beast blew its extra nose, making a honking sound which made the windows rattle.

"That clears the way for smelling action," Zoo said in explanation.

JUST then the view lit up and the bristles along Pupsie's back suddenly stood on end. The scene in the viewplate was familiar. Six ratcatchers were lined up, one behind another, with the foremost pointing the Colt at his own midriff. Through the adjoining wall, which was transparent on the viewplate, a man in the uniform of the chief rat of the ratcatchers, was visible holding his fingers in his ears and with a terrified and painful expression on his face.

The blonde woman jumped when the bang sounded and the six ratcatchers reeled and then collapsed. The chief beyond the wall looked a trifle relieved to find himself still alive, but Zitts snorted with sud-

denly disgust.

"Bunglers!" Zitts growled, then looked at Pupsie. "That weapon, Pupsie," he said. "Get a good whiff of it."

The huge nostrils flared and sniffed in a way that stirred a strong breeze in the room and sent prickles along the blonde woman's spine. Then Pupsie looked up and winked.

"Now trace it to the murderer," Zitts ordered.

Pupsie gathered himself for a leap at the chief rat, but Zoo sprang between him and the viewplate and shut off the machine.

"No, no," Zitts cautioned. "His smell is on the weapon, of course. But he merely examined it. Use your head now and tune in the machine yourself and find the murderer."

Nodding, Pupsie moved close to the machine, switched it on and began tuning radarlike by sniffing and twisting the dials. Almost at once his eyes lighted and his tongue lolled out and his muscles stiffened for action. The blonde woman held her breath, expecting to view the murderer.

The view lit up faintly, became brighter, became a dark alley with a cat inspecting a garbage pail.

"No, no!" Zitts cautioned. "This is no time for sport. Get down to business."

Pupsie continued tuning and suddenly began panting and gasping and twitching in every muscle.

Recognizing the emergency, Zitts

thundered "The treadmill, Zoo!"

ZOO stamped on the floor and started an endless carpet moving under Pupsie's feet. It was just in time, for Pupsie was running like the very devil in order to remain in the same place. He was in pursuit of a female dog which appeared on the viewplate.

Features darkening and eyes blazing, Zitts waited for Zoo to turn off the machine. Then in a thunderously quiet voice he called Pupsie to book.

"I warned you this is no time for sport!" Zitts glanced at Zoo who produced a dogcatcher's net and held it threateningly above Pupsie. The poor dog shuddered. "For the last time," Zitts said ominously, "I'm warning you."

The blonde woman felt so sorry for the creature she turned tearful eyes to Zitts in mute appeal. Zitts appeared to relent.

"When you find that murderer," he said, temporizing, "I shall order you a special nine-foot bone from one of those Martian tyrannosaurus-plexus creatures. Now, keep your mind on your work!"

At the mention of a tyrannosaurus-plexus bone Pupsie's jaws slavered and a look of rapture came over his ungainly features. Clearly he had been reformed.

Setting to work immediately, Pupsie sniffed and tuned by twisting the dials, and suddenly the blonde woman gasped and almost

fainted.

"That's my lover's apartment," she said in horror. "I recognize the bed. Surely he can't be the murderer."

"Your ex-lover," Zitts pointed out. "That's a corpse in the bed."

The blonde woman fainted, for it was true. The man was dead, or should have been, for he neither breathed nor gave any sign of heart-beat.

"Examine that room," Zitts ordered Pupsie, "until you get a whiff of the second murderer."

Soon Pupsie was off again, sniffing and tuning, and just as another scene came in the blonde woman opened her eyes, gasped, "Another of my lovers," and fainted again.

"Ex-lover," Zitts corrected and directed Pupsie to pursue this murderer also.

They ran through three more murders before the woman recovered, and Zitts deducted, which subsequently proved correct, that these were also ex-lovers. Then, as the woman recovered and was composing herself and straightening her mouth and re-making her face, they came upon a scene with a live person in it.

"No, no! No!" the blonde cried. "He's my next to the best lover. He wouldn't murder anybody."

THE man, about ninety years old, gray and stooped, sat placidly on what appeared to be the railing of a balcony and contemplated the

rolling countryside a hundred stories below. At a signal from Zitts, Zoo switched the machine to two-directional view.

"All right, murderer," Zitts snarled. "Confess!"

The man looked up, started, then almost fell over the rail as he caught sight of Mrs. Brown and Smith.

"No, no! I don't want him brought to justice," the blonde woman cried. "If he loved me enough to commit all those murders I want to marry him."

Zitts pondered this briefly, then said, "That ought to be punishment enough. What have you got to say, murderer?"

The man cowered back, trembled. "I'll confess," he said quaveringly. "But I ask for a reasonably humane punishment like being boiled in oil. Marrying that woman would be more than I can bear."

Zitts nodded understandingly. After all, he was humane even with criminals. And although he was not a man to compromise with crime he could not bear the light of horror in the man's eyes. "I'll take the matter under consideration," he said. "But I promise nothing. If you confess promptly and clear up the mystery, your chance of being boiled in oil will be somewhat improved. I'm waiting."

"It's like this," the man began, wiping perspiration from his brow. "On my ninetieth birth anniversary I decided to have one more fling and retire until I had reached my

second youth-hood at the age of a hundred. I visited seventeen of my best sweethearts that day and night, and twelve of my wives. It was rather exhausting."

"I can imagine," Zitts said encouragingly. "Go on."

"Mrs. Brown and Smith was among those I visited," the man went on tiredly. "She was the most exhausting of all, actually insisting that I kiss her hand before I left. It took a lot out of me."

"Go on," Zitts urged impatiently.

"I swore off then and there," said the monogamian with a sigh, "and that left Mrs. Brown and Smith with only five lovers and two husbands. That increased the load on these remaining seven and they began to urge me to come back and do my duty. I refused."

"That," the man went on, "brought things to a crisis. In desperation Smith made another appeal to me. Again I refused, but I gave him some sound advice, to wit: that he should make the other lovers carry a little more of the burden. This he tried without success, and again I advised him, this time arming him with an ancient weapon. In turn he went to each of the other lovers and offered them their choice, and each chose suicide in preference to fulfilling more than their normal obligations. When he realized what he had done, and what a tremendous burden would now fall on him, he turned the weapon on himself."

THE man paused, wiped away the tears and added, "I am guilty of six murders," he said dolefully. "And Brown, who is being held by the ratcatchers, will naturally make a false confession and ask to be put to death at once—when he realizes that his wife has neither lovers nor another husband. It is sad, and if you'll just boil me in oil as quickly as possible—"

"No, no!" the blonde woman screamed. "I want to marry you."

Startled, the man whipped out a strange, uneasily weapon, on which was inscribed, it was learned on later investigation, this legend: S&W. He placed the weapon against his temple and a bang resulted. Then he toppled over the rail and disappeared.

"Which end of that weapon did he place nearest him?" Zitts demanded as Zoo switched off the machine and the view faded.

"The tube end," Zoo replied.

"I knew I was right," Zitts exulted. "Get in touch with the chief rat and tell him the case is solved, wrapped up. He can release Brown and forget it. Also tell him I have learned the secret of that weapon.

I was right all along. Tell him personally to place the muzzle of it against his temple and finger that little lever underneath. I am sure that is the way it is done. Tell him to try it at once and let me know the results."

Zitts sighed in satisfaction, glanced once more at the lovely curves of the blonde woman, and pressed the button which set in motion the machinery to ease the lounging chair beneath the desk and shape it into a couch.

"Ssh—b!" The Venusian girl signaled silence. "After he's been in action for a few seconds," she whispered, "he always rests for a week or so."

The blonde woman rose quietly and marched wavily to the door, opened it. Then, with tears of thankfulness in her limpid blue eyes, and a last worshipping glance at the place where Zitts had disappeared, she stepped into the corridor and went in search of replacements for her used up husbands and lovers.

Pupsie waddled over to a corner and curled up to dream of a tyrannosaurusplexus bone.

THE END

The Law Of Malthus

It's been a long, long time since the philosopher-economist Malthus propounded his fascinating ideas, and since the years following the Indus-

trial Revolution, they've fallen rather into disfavor. But recent events, notably the amazing growth of the birth-rate since the end of the Second

World War, have again brought him into the scientific and popular eye.

Malthus reasoned originally this way: there is a certain amount of food producing capability in the world; land, climate and so on governs this. But the population of the world (even as it was in his time) is steadily increasing. Therefore the world can support only a limited number of people. Nature (he said) has provided a check on the indiscriminate growth of human population. This check consists of famine, disease, and war!

You can imagine what a hornet's nest was stirred up with this thesis. People, religious and lay, flew into a rage at the mention of his name. But there was a group who agreed with him. Regardless of the theory, the world kept growing enormously and the food supply continued to be enough.

Apparently Malthus was all wrong.

Well, in light of his limited knowledge, he certainly was. He hadn't envisioned the Industrial Age which provided Man with tools and techniques for completely changing his agricultural methods, making it possible for a farmer to produce an incredible amount of food. Then transportation changed the face of the Earth. All these things combined seemed to make a monkey of Malthus.

And to top it off, it was found that as nations became more industrialized, they wanted more material things—and less children. In Western countries the birth rates dropped or at least became static.

Only India, China, Japan, the Soviet Union seemed to have expanding birth rates and in the first two countries famine, and disease seemed to take care of that problem. In the latter two, war seemed to help.

But these were the only places where Malthus' ideas seemed to have any validity at all and it was expected that as soon as all four countries would become industrialized, they too would follow the popular trend.

Science prior to the Second World War said that mankind was limiting the growth of itself and we need never worry about over-populating the Earth. In fact, we were approaching a static condition.

But then something went haywire, and the statistical observations of recent years seemed to throw things out of gear. As the most industrialized nation on Earth the U.S. is a good place to examine events which to a lesser extent are occurring elsewhere.

Instead of a population which is decreasing, the U.S. is growing with fantastic leaps and bounds. Already science is wondering whether or not Malthusianism may not have had something. We have a high birth rate, we are a wealthy people, we have limited resources, and above all, we seem to have acquired an amazing desire to reproduce ourselves. Where will it end?

This time there are no ready explanations. The trends have reversed themselves and we are faced with a Malthusian situation. How will we react to it? For one thing, science is keeping mum. It is obvious that the Malthusian solution of war, disease and famine is out. On the other hand we do not have unlimited resources. But no one is sticking out his neck to make any weird predictions. Errors are too common.

Our own personal opinion, which will only be shown by future events, is that we'll once again reach a stabilization period and that this momentary flare in rates is just that—temporary.



"DRINK MY RED BLOOD..."

By Richard Matheson

People in the neighborhood avoided Jules. For he was not like other children; his one fond wish in life was to become an immortal—vampire!

THE people on the block decided definitely that Jules was crazy when they heard about his composition.

There had been suspicions for a long time.

He made people shiver with his blank stare. His coarse gutteral tongue sounded unnatural in his frail body. The paleness of his skin upset many children. It seemed to hang loose around his flesh. He hated sunlight.

And his ideas were a little out of place for the people who lived on the block.

Jules wanted to be a vampire.

People declared it common knowledge that he was born on a night

when winds uprooted trees. They said he was born with three teeth. They said he'd used them to fasten himself on his mother's breast drawing blood with the milk.

They said he used to cackle and bark in his crib after dark. They said he walked at two months and sat staring at the moon whenever it shone.

Those were things that people said.

His parents were always worried about him. An only child, they noticed his flaws quickly.

They thought he was blind until the doctor told them it was just a vacuous stare. He told them that Jules, with his large head,



Illustrated by Romeo Raymond

might be a genius or an idiot. It turned out he was an idiot.

He never spoke a word until he was five. Then, one night coming up to supper, he sat down at the table and said "Death."

His parents were torn between delight and disgust. They finally settled for a place in between the two feelings. They decided that Jules couldn't have realized what the word meant.

But Jules did.

From that night on, he built up such a large vocabulary that everyone who knew him was astounded. He not only acquired every word spoken to him, words from signs, magazines, books; he made up his own words.

Like — nightouch. Or—killove. They were really several words that melted into each other. They said things Jules felt but couldn't explain with other words.

He used to sit on the porch while the other children played hopscotch, stickball and other games. He sat there and stared at the sidewalk and made up words.

Until he was twelve Jules kept pretty much out of trouble.

Of course there was the time they found him undressing Olive Jones in an alley. And another time he was discovered dissecting a kitten on his bed.

But there were many years in between. Those scandals were forgotten.

In general he went through child-

hood merely disgusting people.

He went to school but never studied. He spent about two or three terms in each grade. The teachers all knew him by his first name. In some subjects like reading and writing he was almost brilliant.

In others he was hopeless.

ONE Saturday when he was twelve, Jules went to the movies. He saw "Dracula."

When the show was over he walked, a throbbing nerve mass, through the little girl and boy ranks.

He went home and locked himself in the bathroom for two hours.

His parents pounded on the door and threatened but he wouldn't come out.

Finally he unlocked the door and sat down at the supper table. He had a bandage on his thumb and a satisfied look on his face.

The morning after he went to the library. It was Sunday. He sat on the steps all day waiting for it to open. Finally, he went home.

The next morning he came back instead of going to school.

He found *Dracula* on the shelves. He couldn't borrow it because he wasn't a member and to be a member he had to bring in one of his parents.

So he stuck the book down his pants and left the library and never brought it back.

He went to the park and sat down

and read the book through. It was late evening before he finished.

He started at the beginning again, reading as he ran from street light to street light, all the way home.

He didn't hear a word of the scolding he got for missing lunch and supper. He ate, went in his room and read the book to the finish. They asked him where he got the book. He said he found it.

As the days passed Jules read the story over and over. He never went to school.

Late at night, when he had fallen into an exhausted slumber, his mother used to take the book into the living room and show it to her husband.

One night they noticed that Jules had underlined certain sentences with dark shaky pencil lines.

Like: "The lips were crimson with fresh blood and the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death robe."

Or: "When the blood began to spurt out, he took my hands in one of his, holding them tight and, with the other seized my neck and pressed my mouth to the wound . . ."

When his mother saw this, she threw the book down the garbage chute.

In the next morning when Jules found the book missing he screamed and twisted his mother's arm until she told him where the book was.

Then he ran down to the cellar

and dug in the piles of garbage until he found the book.

Coffee grounds and egg yolk on his hands and wrists, he went to the park and read it again.

For a month he read the book avidly. Then he knew it so well he threw it away and just thought about it.

Absence notes were coming from school. His mother yelled. Jules decided to go back for a while.

He wanted to write a composition.

ONE day he wrote it in class. When everyone was finished writing, the teacher asked if anyone wanted to read their composition to the class.

Jules raised his hand.

The teacher was surprised. But she felt charity. She wanted to encourage him. She drew in her tiny jab of a chin and smiled.

"All right," she said, "Pay attention children. Jules is going to read us his composition.

Jules stood up. He was excited. The paper shook in his hands.

"My Ambition by . . ."

"Come to the front of the class, Jules, dear."

Jules went to the front of the class. The teacher smiled lovingly. Jules started again.

"My Ambition by Jules Dracula."

The smile sagged.

"When I grow up I want to be a vampire."

The teacher's smiling lips jerked down and out. Her eyes popped wide.

"I want to live forever and get even with everybody and make all the girls vampires. I want to smell of death."

"Jules!"

"I want to have a foul breath that stinks of dead earth and crypts and sweet coffins."

The teacher shuddered. Her hands twitched on her green blotter. She couldn't believe her ears. She looked at the children. They were gaping. Some of them were giggling. But not the girls.

"I want to be all cold and have rotten flesh with stolen blood in the veins."

"That will . . . hrrumph!"

The teacher cleared her throat mightily.

"That will be all Jules," she said.

Jules talked louder and desperately.

"I want to sink my terrible white teeth in my victims' necks. I want them to . . ."

"Jules! Go to your seat this instant!"

"I want them to slide like razors in the flesh and into the veins," read Jules ferociously.

The teacher jolted to her feet. Children were shivering. None of them were giggling.

"Then I want to draw my teeth out and let the blood flow easy in my mouth and run hot in my throat and . . ."

The teacher grabbed his arm. Jules tore away and ran to a corner. Barricaded behind a stool he yelled:

"And drip off my tongue and run out my lips down my victims' throats! I want to drink girls' blood!"

The teacher lunged for him. She dragged him out of the corner. He clawed at her and screamed all the way to the door and the principal's office.

"That is my ambition! That is my ambition! *That is my ambition!*"

IT was grim.

Jules was locked in his room. The teacher and the principal sat with Jules' parents. They were talking in sepulchral voices.

They were recounting the scene.

All along the block parents were discussing it. Most of them didn't believe it first. They thought their children made it up.

Then they thought what horrible children they'd raised if the children could make up such things.

So they believed it.

After that everyone watched Jules like a hawk. People avoided his touch and look. Parents pulled their children off the street when he approached. Everyone whispered tales of him.

There were more absence notes.

Jules told his mother he wasn't going to school anymore. Nothing would change his mind. He never

went again.

When a truant officer came to the apartment Jules would run over the roofs until he was far away from there.

A year wasted by.

Jules wandered the streets searching for something; he didn't know what. He looked in alleys. He looked in garbage cans. He looked in lots. He looked on the east side and the west side and in the middle.

He couldn't find what he wanted.

He rarely slept. He never spoke. He stared down all the time. He forgot his special words.

Then,

ONE day in the park, Jules strolled through the zoo.

An electric shock passed through him when he saw the vampire bat.

His eyes grew wide and his discolored teeth shone dully in a wide smile.

From that day on, Jules went daily to the zoo and looked at the bat. He spoke to it and called it the Count. He felt in his heart it was really a man who had changed.

A rebirth of culture struck him.

He stole another book from the library. It told all about wild life.

He found the page on the vampire bat. He tore it out and threw the book away.

He learned the selection by heart.

He knew how the bat made its wound. How it lapped up the blood like a kitten drinking cream. How it walked on folded wing stalks and

hind legs like a black fury spider. Why it took no nourishment but blood.

Month after month Jules stared at the bat and talked to it. It became the one comfort in his life. The one symbol of dreams come true.

* * *

One day Jules noticed that the bottom of the wire covering the cage had come loose.

He looked around, his black eyes shifting. He didn't see anyone looking. It was a cloudy day. Not many people were there.

Jules tugged at the wire.

It moved a little.

Then he saw a man come out of the monkey house. So he pulled back his hand and strolled away whistling a song he had just made up.

Late at night, when he was supposed to be asleep he would walk barefoot past his parents' room. He would hear his father and mother snoring. He would hurry out, put on his shoes and run to the zoo.

Everytime the watchman was not around, Jules would tug at the wiring.

He kept on pulling it loose.

When he was finished and had to run home, he pushed the wire in again. Then no one could tell.

All day Jules would stand in front of the cage and look at the Count and chuckle and tell him he'd soon be free again.

He told the Count all the things

he knew. He told the Count he was going to practice climbing down walls head first.

He told the Count not to worry. He'd soon be out. Then, together, they could go all around and drink girls' blood.

ONE night Jules pulled the wire out and crawled under it into the cage.

It was very dark.

He crept on his knees to the little wooden house. He listened to see if he could hear the Count squeaking.

He stuck his arm in the black doorway. He kept whispering.

He jumped when he felt a needle jab in his finger.

With a look of great pleasure on his thin face, Jules drew the fluttering hairy bat to him.

He climbed down from the cage with it and ran out of the zoo; out of the park. He ran down the silent streets.

It was getting late in the morning. Light touched the dark skies with grey. He couldn't go home. He had to have a place.

He went down an alley and climbed over a fence. He held tight to the bat. It lapped at the dribble of blood from his finger.

He went across a yard and into a little deserted shack.

It was dark inside and damp. It was full of rubble and tin cans and soggy cardboard and excrement.

Jules made sure there was no

way the bat could escape.

Then he pulled the door tight and put a stick through the metal loop.

He felt his heart beating hard and his limbs trembling. He let go of the bat. It flew to a dark corner and hung on the wood.

Jules feverishly tore off his shirt. His lips shook. He smiled a crazy smile.

He reached down into his pants pocket and took out a little pen knife he had stolen from his mother.

He opened it and ran a finger over the blade. It sliced through the flesh.

With shaking fingers he jabbed at his throat. He hacked. The blood ran through his fingers.

"Count! Count!" he cried in frenzied joy, "Drink my red blood! Drink me! Drink me!"

He stumbled over the tin cans and slipped and felt for the bat. It sprang from the wood and soared across the shack and fastened itself on the other side.

Tears ran down Jules' cheeks.

He gritted his teeth. The blood ran across his shoulders and across his thin hairless chest.

HIS body shook in fever. He staggered back toward the other side. He tripped and felt his side torn open on the sharp edge of a tin can.

His hands went out. They clutched the bat. He placed it against his throat. He sank on his back on

the cool wet earth. He sighed.

He started to moan and clutch at his chest. His stomach heaved. The black bat on his neck silently lapped his blood.

Jules felt his life seeping away.

He thought of all the years past. The waiting. His parents. School. Dracula. Dreams. For this. This sudden glory.

Jules' eyes flickered open.

The inside of the reeking shack swam about him.

It was hard to breathe. He opened his mouth to gasp in the air. He sucked it in. It was foul. It made him cough. His skinny body lurched on the cold ground.

Mists crept away in his brain.

One by one like drawn veils.

Suddenly his mind was filled with terrible clarity.

He felt the aching pain in his side.

He knew he was lying half naked on garbage and letting a flying rat

drink his blood.

With a strangled cry, he reached up and tore away the furry throbbing bat. He flung it away from him. It came back, fanning his face with its vibrating wings.

Jules staggered to his feet.

He felt for the door. He could hardly see. He tried to stop his throat from bleeding so.

He managed to get the door open.

Then, lurching into the dark yard, he fell on his face in the long grass blades.

He tried to call out for help.

But no sounds save a bubbling mockery of words came from his lips.

He heard the fluttering wings.

Then, suddenly they were gone.

Strong fingers lifted him gently. Through dazing eyes Jules saw the tall dark man whose eyes shone like rubies.

"My son," the man said.

. . . THE END . .

WATCH FOR:

THE MARTIANS AND THE COYS

By MACK REYNOLDS

* * *

MASTER RACE

BY RICHARD ASHBY

* * *

THEY REACHED FOR THE MOON

By WILLIAM OBERFIELD

* * *

Plus many other great stories of science & fantasy by top name writers—and talented new authors. You'll find them all in the pages of **IMAGINATION**. Watch for the June issue, on sale May 1st.

AFTERNOON OF A FAHN

By Eric Frank Russell

Rich ores made the little planet a bonanza for Earthmen, so they landed to reap a harvest. The problem was — did they really want to leave?

The strange little men with the gnarly stick smiled as they approached warily



THE trap was anything but apparent. It waited with an air of complete innocence. Victims walked into it confidently, willingly, even eagerly—and never knew what hit them.

About the confidence, willingness and eagerness of the four-man crew of scout-vessel 87D there could be no doubt whatever. They made it obvious with the way they came down. Out of a clear blue sky they



swooped in their golden vessel with a crimson trim along its sides and its number writ large upon its pointed prow. Thunder poured from its tail in rhythmic bursts of sound so violent that leaves quivered on trees for miles around and birds were shocked to silence.

With aggressive self-assurance they dumped the ship on a grassy flat and scrambled out while yet the noise of their arrival continued to echo and re-echo over hills and dales. They made a tough, space-hardened group outside the main port, greeting fresh air and solid earth with the grim satisfaction of those who have been without either for far too long.

Reed Wingrove, the astrogator, said gleefully, "Gee whiz! What a sweet little lump of plasma. They should make us space-commodores for discovering this one." He was young, tall, fresh-featured and nursed the hope that he might be suitable material for big brass.

"More likely they'll toss us in the clink," thought Jacques Drouillard, his black eyes taking in the surrounding scene. "We've overshot official limits by a slice of a lifetime. We had no right to come so far. They'll have written us off for dead by the time we get back."

"Or as deserters," suggested Bill Maguire.

"I take all responsibility for where we go or do not go," reminded Captain Walter Searle. A big, slow-speaking man, he spent much

time with his thoughts.

"Jacques can hear the awful sound of the years rushing past," Bill Maguire explained. There was a good-natured grin on his freckled Irish pan as he eyed the contrastingly swarthy Drouillard. "He never forgets that time and fair ladies wait for no doddering space-jerk."

"Maybe he's got something there," put in Reed Wingrove sobering a lot. He pointed southward. "There's uranium under those hills. The frenzied way the counters clicked as we shot over them suggests that they're solid with the stuff. It might be the strike of the century, right where it's most needed, just beyond the exploratory rim. It's to be had for the taking, no price asked." He looked them over, added, "That is to say, no price other than the best years of our lives."

MAGUIRE met him eye for eye and said, "We've been shaken up together in a hot and noisy bottle for months and months and months. We're due for an equally long dose of the same medicine before we get back. Isn't that all the more reason for being happy now?" Smoothing his red hair, he sniffed appreciatively at the atmosphere, worked his boots around in the long, soft grass. "C'mon, let's get rid of the space-heebies and enjoy life between the spells of misery."

"What makes you think you suffer?" asked Captain Searle, looking at each in turn. "You signed on

for ten years, with your eyes wide open."

"I got kidded by all that stuff about celestial Callisto," grumbled Drouillard. "Thought I'd get about twenty jaunts there and back. I didn't bargain for spending most of my term on one long trip. Sixty months to get here, sixty to return, plus the twelve we'll have to stay put while waiting for favorable planetary setups. That makes six years at one go. Six years is a heck of a long time." He rubbed his blue chin, making rasping sounds. "Too much to give for a hunk of uranium, large or small."

"If we can give it," said Maguire. "It may belong to somebody else who doesn't want to sell." He gestured to one side, added, "I'm inclined to think so because here comes somebody else!"

Leaning against the rim of a warm propulsion tube, he eased his gun in its holster, chewed a juicy stem of grass, and watched the newcomer's approach.

The others reacted similarly, holding themselves prepared, but not alarmed. There was nothing frightening about the appearance of this world's highest life-form. Besides, they had complete confidence in their own power, an assurance born of human settlement of many scores of worlds, some hostile, some merely eerie. And, of course, they were blissfully unaware of the trap.

THE arrival was a half-pint humanoid, a fact that surprised

them not at all. Grabbing the cosmos brings a sudden surfeit of surprises, after which one loses the capacity for amazement. One learns to expect anything, even a midget mock-up of oneself, and remains phlegmatic. So no eyebrows were lifted as this world's first representative came near.

He got right up to them, displaying no fear, but examining them with a certain childish naïveté. Small, no more than three feet in height, he had perky, birdlike features and sharp, quickly darting eyes. A cone-shaped felt hat of vivid crimson sat on his head and was pulled so far down that it made his pointed ears stick out. His clothes were an equally vivid green with silver trimmings. His long, narrow, green shoes bore silver buttons. His only weapon was a gnarly stick upon which he leaned while he surveyed them with brilliant and beady optics.

"They're tiny," murmured Wingrove to the others. "We could have guessed it from that toy-town we spotted just before we dived." Offering the dwarf an ingratiating smile, he pointed to himself and said, "Reed Wingrove."

Giving him a quick, piercing glance, the other made no response. They broke the embarrassing silence by introducing themselves one by one. Motionless except for his continually shifting orbs, the dwarf leaned on his stick and ruminated.

After a while he said, "Rifkin,"

In a small, reedy voice.

"He can speak, anyway," commented Drouillard. "That is something! We won't have to go double-jointed trying to make sign-talk. It's mighty tiring playing snake-arms. Now we can learn his language or teach him ours."

"I fail to see," said Rifkin, in perfect English, "why that should be necessary."

The effect was electric. Space-born phlegmatism got thrown to the winds. Drouillard jumped a foot. Captain Searle pulled his gun, shoved it back, scowled around in search of the suspected ventriloquist. Maguire hastily unleaned from the propulsion tube, carelessly braced himself on the hotter part, farther back, burned his hand and yelped with pain.

Taking a firm grip on himself, Wingrove asked, "You understand our mode of talk?"

"Of course," said Rifkin, with disarming casualness. He used his gnarly stick to behead something like a daisy.

"How the deuce—?" began Captain Searle, still watching the others for suspicious mouth-movements.

IGNORING his commander, Wingrove went determinedly on. "Is English spoken here?"

"How silly!" remarked Rifkin.

There didn't seem to be a satisfactory retort to that one. It was too obvious for adverse comment. In fact "silly" was an understatement—it was downright ridiculous.

Wingrove sought around for another angle, said, "Then how do you know it?"

"I can *fake* it," informed Rifkin, much as one would mention the obvious to a child. "Surely you know that? How can people communicate if they cannot *fake* one another's speech-patterns?"

"*Morbleau!*" Drouillard ejaculated. He stared around suspiciously, in unconscious imitation of Searle. "*A chaque saint sa chandelle!*"

"*Si chacun tire de son côté!*" agreed Rifkin with devastating impartiality.

Drouillard pulled out lumps of hair, then squatted on his heels and began to eat grass. He appeared to be working off something in the way of feelings. With mounting irritation, Captain Searle watched him for a while, then couldn't stand it any longer.

"Stop . . . doing . . . THAT!" he bawled, with pauses for emphasis. He nudged the other with a heavy boot. As Drouillard came erect, Searle demanded, "Now, what was all that double-talk you just pulled?"

"French," said Drouillard dreamily. "They speak it where I come from, in Canada." He blearied at the dwarf. "And *he* knows it!"

"How can I possibly *know* it?" Rifkin contradicted. One cannot *know* what has never been learned! He made a sniff of disgust. "I *fake* it."

"I'll take you up on that," Searle snapped back at him. "How do you *join* it?"

"There is a prize question," decided Rifkin, twitching his pointed ears. "A veritable conundrum because if you do not know the answer, it is evident that you cannot *join* a speech-pattern yourselves."

"Would I ask, if I could?" inquired Searle.

"And if you cannot do it yourself," Rifkin went on, "there is no way in which I can explain it to you." His piercing little eyes met Searle's. "Could you make an earless stone appreciate your playing on a flute?"

"No," Searle admitted.

"Well, then, there you are!" Rifkin leaned his slight weight on his crooked stick. "I doubt whether Mab herself could explain it. Or Morgaine either, for that matter. You have asked me the impossible."

"Let's leave it at that and consider ourselves lucky," Wingrove suggested to the dissatisfied Searle. "Here we are, landed undamaged, and in communication with the inhabitants, all within one hour. I bet we've busted a record."

"Leave this to me," Searle ordered. He turned to Rifkin. "We are anxious to learn as much as possible about this world of yours and—"

"Why?" asked Rifkin.

Was there shrewd understanding in those sharp little eyes? A sparkle of cynicism, a depth of guile? No

way of telling.

SEARLE went patiently on. "Mutual understanding is the basis of friendship which is essential if we are to maintain contact to our common profit." He waited for an effect that did not prove visible. "Now if one of my men could pay a courtesy call to your nearest town—"

"He will be quite welcome," assured Rifkin. As an afterthought, he added, "In Ballygullion."

"Where?" screamed Maguire, his red hair standing up like a brush.

"Ballygullion," repeated Rifkin.

"What's wrong with that?" demanded Searle, staring hard at Maguire.

Pop-eyed, Maguire said, "Jeepers, that's where I was born!"

"Natch!" observed Rifkin, airily treating the incomprehensible as obvious.

Bunching his hands until the knuckles were white, Searle said to Rifkin, "Why the natch? How can he have been born here? This planet was completely unknown to us before our arrival." He let a puzzled and wary gaze run over the general scene. "There is something decidedly off-the-orbit about this place."

"The town has any name one cares to give it," Rifkin explained, again in the manner of tutoring a kindergarten. "Some call it this, some call it that. It can have one name today, another name tomor-

row. I can recall a rare occasion when three persons referred to it by the same name for a whole week, they being lazy-minded."

"Pinch me awake," Drouillard requested, offering an arm to Wingrove.

"What does it matter?" Rifkin asked. "One can easily *fake* the name given to it by any person at any moment."

"So now, being Wednesday, it is Ballygullion?" Maguire asked weakly.

"If you like the name. You ought to like it. I *faked* it when I looked at you and knew it should please you."

"That settles it," snapped Searle. He gave Maguire the cold, authoritative eye. "Somebody's got to stick out his neck and get us the dirt. Who could be better than a native by birth? I accept your offer to go."

"Who?" said Maguire, dazed. "Me?"

They all chorused, "You!"

Rifkin's eyes glittered as he took him away.

IT was ten days before Bill Maguire returned to find the crew preparing themselves for action. Struggling in through the main port, he breathed heavily, stared down at the ladder up which he had climbed.

"Who's been stretching the stairs?"

Putting down the gun which he had just oiled, Captain Searle glow-

ered at him. "You're in the nick of time. We were about to set out and pull that midget hung apart until we found either you or your body."

"Didn't know I was so much appreciated," said Maguire.

"One man is a quarter of my crew," Searle went on, remaining severe. "I don't lose a man without making someone pay. What the heck detained you?"

"Wine, women and song," informed Maguire, blissfully.

"Huh?" Reed Wingrove dropped what he was doing.

"Eh?" Drouillard stood up, snapped his fingers. He had the expression of one who wasn't there when the manna fell.

"Sit down!" rapped Searle. He returned his attention to the impudent prodigal. His voice was slightly acid. "I don't suppose the real purpose of our mission ever crossed your mind?"

"Not while I could help it," Maguire agreed, displaying complete lack of shame. "Who'd bother about new frontiers, territorial developments or mineral deposits while roaming around with Mab?" Pursing his lips, he gave a low, ecstatic whistle. "She is tall, dark-eyed, sylphlike and gives me fizzy feelings all over. She makes me want to bury myself here for keeps."

"What have they been pouring down your neck?" inquired Captain Searle, studying him closely.

"Stuff called mead. It's made

with honey, herbs and dew fresh off the grass. It's the most wonderful —"

"There can't be honey without bees," Wingrove chipped in. "Are you trying to kid us there are bees here too, same as on Earth?"

"Millions of them," declared Maguire. "Herds and herds of them. Big, fat, busy ones, all as tame as farmhouse cats. The local folk talk to them and the bees talk back. They can *talk* each other, see?"

"I don't see," said Searle, motioning Wingrove into silence. "Neither do I care." His gaze was still penetrating as he kept it on Maguire. "Who is this Mab who has watered down the goo you use for brains?"

"One of Rifkin's twin daughters." Plainly, Maguire was too bemused to take umbrage. "The best of two pips. The other one is Peg, and she's something too! If it weren't for my civilized upbringing I could—"

"Oh, no, you couldn't. One is too much for you, let alone two." Searle scowled at the metal bulkhead and muttered to nobody in particular. "Looks like we blundered when we picked this red-headed romantic. Now what?"

"Let me go," suggested Drouillard, eagerly. His dark eyes were aflame with the zeal of a man offered a grab at lost opportunities.

Maguire bridled at him. "Lay off, Casanova. You're not taking the

girls back home." Defiantly, he leaned on the rim of a desk, then frowned in puzzlement and bent over to scan the floor. "Who's been raising the furniture? Couldn't you find anything better to do?"

"Nobody's touched that desk," Wingrove told him. "It seems bigger because you are shorter. I noticed you looked slightly trimmied-down the moment you came back. Reckon you've worn two inches off your heels in hot pursuit of everything but what you came here for."

"Nothing wrong with my heels," denied Maguire, raising a leg to examine his boot. "This desk has been upped an inch or two."

"Sober yourself," Wingrove retorted. "You overdid the mead-stuff. You didn't have to be greedy."

Searle chipped in with impatience. "Quit arguing." He regarded Maguire with authoritative disapproval. "What was that you said about taking these females back?"

"They came along with me, just for the jaunt. I left them outside. Took them I wouldn't be long."

"Holy smoke!" Drouillard made for the lock, moving fast to beat the others and get out before Searle could think up a contrary command.

They heard him scramble hurriedly down the ladder. There came a brief chatter during which his deep tones underlay a pair of tinkling voices like little bells. More ladder noises. Drouillard reappeared, conducting his visitors with un-

warranted proprietorship.

"Here they are, Cap." He had the excitement of one suddenly endowed with a new interest in life.

SEARLE looked them over slowly, methodically and with much of the suspicion of an elephant testing a pitfall. They were a pair of ash-blondes, curvaceous, tiny, and as alike as mirror-images of each other. He estimated their height as no more than thirty inches. Both wore crimson caps and bright green clothes trimmed with silver. Holding hands as they posed side by side, they regarded him with tip-tilted eyes, large, blue and guileless. There was a peculiar quality about those eyes and he had to think a while before he found a word to describe it: elfin.

"Which is Mab?" he inquired.

"Me." The one on the left dimpled at him.

Leaning back in his chair, Searle sighed and said to Maguire, "So she is tall and dark-eyed?"

"Well, isn't she?" Maguire pointed at the evidence, indicating the incontrovertible.

They all had another look at Mab, a long, careful look. Manifestly she was blue-eyed and very small. Her dimples deepened.

After a while, Searle uttered an emphatic, "No!"

"All right," said Maguire. "Either you're blind or I'm nuts."

Mab laughed in tiny tinkling tones.

"He's nuts," opined Drouillard. "Space-happy and gone to seed." His own gaze nailed itself firmly on Peg. "But I don't blame him. I could go a bit nuts myself for that green-eyed one with the long chestnut locks." His gaze grew bold and ardent. "She resembles my dream girl."

Nudging him, Reed Wingrove asked, "Which one with the long chestnut locks?"

"Use your peepers," invited Drouillard, continuing to devour the object of his attention.

"I'm using mine," interjected Maguire. "Peg is a blue-eyed blonde."

"G'wan," Drouillard scoffed. "You can't look straight even at your own choice."

CAPTAIN Searle breathed deeply, reclaimed his gun, hefted it in his hand to feel its weight and balance. When he spoke it was with the ponderous deliberation of one whose mind is made up.

"Reed, show those two girls the way out. Close the lock behind them and keep it closed." The gun came up as Maguire and Drouillard tensed. "Not you two goofies. Neither of you. You're staying put. That's an order!" As Maguire backed away from him and got nearer to the lock, he added in tight tones, "Be careful, Bill. So help me, if you don't obey I'll let you have it!"

"But you cannot," contradicted Mab in her small, chiming voice. "I have *known* that in the last re-

sort you could not bring yourself to do it."

Still holding Peg's midget hand, she exited through the lock, drifting out light-footed, with short, dainty steps. Maguire followed, like a sleepwalker. So did Drouillard.

Silently, introspectively, Reed Wingrove closed the lock behind them. He returned to his place, his tread clanging loudly through the ship's plates. There was a faint, sweet scent in the air, an odor of femininity, beckoning, inviting. Captain Searle had not moved. He was sitting at the table, his unused weapon still in his grip, while his eyes stared bleakly at the wall.

The minutes crawled by until Wingrove said, "Did you notice that curious design upon their silver buttons? It was on Rifkin's, too. Like four hearts arranged in a circle with their points brought together. It looked sort of familiar to me, but I'm darned if I can place it."

Searle made no reply. He continued to look blankly at the wall while his mind mulled over the situation.

THREE weeks crawled by with no sign of the absentees. Wingrove returned from one of the short walks which had become his habit of late, sat himself on the grass beside the grimly brooding Searle, and enjoyed the cool of the ship's shadow.

"How about letting me visit the town, Captain? I might find some-

thing."

"No."

"Why not go yourself, then?"

"No."

"Oh, well." Wingrove lay back, shaded his eyes as he studied the bright sky. "Still stewing the problem?"

"Yes." Searle chewed at his bottom lip. "I have examined it from every conceivable angle and it always gets me the same place—here, for keeps. We can handle the ship with its official minimum of four men, at a pinch, we might be able to manage with three. We can't take it home with two—it's impossible."

"Yes, I know."

"So we're stuck with this planet until one or both of those moonstruck loons sees fit to return."

"We could be pinned down someplace worse," ventured Wingrove, indicating the azure sky, the lush landscape. "The longer I'm here the more homey it looks." Twisting on one side, he plucked a flower, held it out for the other's inspection. "Look—a bluebonnet."

"What of it?" Searle gave it no more than a cursory glance.

"There are bluebonnets way back on Earth."

"Don't remind me," said Searle, ruefully.

"And there are daisies and buttercups and wild mint. I found them all while mooching around the hills." He gave a short, peculiar laugh. "Fancy a hardened space-jerk taking an interest in daisies

and buttercups. Shows how you get after too much of it."

"Too much of what?" asked Searle, frowning at him.

"There was a bird trilling at me by the waterfall," mused Wingrove, ignoring the question. "It had a wonderful song. I found it after a while. It was a hulhul, a thing like a thrush. They're on Earth too, in Persia, I think. Queer, isn't it?"

"Similar conditions might produce similar effects, similar results."

"Maybe," Wingrove conceded. "But I've a feeling that's not the whole story. The similarities are too numerous. Somewhere there's another and better explanation of so many coincidences." He pondered awhile, gnawing a grass-stem, then went on, "I noticed that four-heart sign again today, inscribed in various places, on walls and trees and rocks. Reckon it's some sort of tribal totem. Every time I see it I know it's familiar—but can't place it. Wish I could remember."

"You didn't go anywhere near the town?"

"No, Cap. I kept away, like you said."

"Didn't meet anyone, either?"

"That four-heart thing is a puzzle," said Wingrove, biting the stem. "It's got me worried."

"You didn't meet anyone?" Searle persisted.

"Dozens of times I've seen those four hearts on Earth, but can't pull 'em out of my mind exactly—"

SEARLE stood up, legs braced apart, and looked at him from beneath heavy brows. "Come on, out with it! Let's have no more evasions. You've loped off morning and afternoon for more than a week. You've gone with a gleam in your eyes and come back like a zombie. *Who are you meeting?*"

"Mélusine," Wingrove said reluctantly. He sat up, threw away the grass stalk.

"Ah!" Searle screwed his right fist into the palm of his left hand. "Another of these midget charmers?"

"She's charming, but no midget."

"That's what you think!" said Searle, bitterly. He paced to and fro. "All this, after I'd warned you. I've told you time and time again of the powers they possess, powers we haven't got and don't properly understand."

Wingrove said nothing.

Ceasing his restless parading, Searle faced him and went on, "You know quite well what this Mélusine is doing to you. She is extracting a pictured ideal from your innermost mind, focussing it upon herself, fooling your senses, making herself appear the solid, fleshy creation of your own dreams and desires. It's a combination of telepathy and hypnosis, or something akin to both. It's a psychological weapon, a redoubtable one, a formidable one, because it exploits the weakest chink in anyone's armor. It persuades a man to make a fool of himself for

the only reason he is willing to become a fool. It is damnable!"

"It is wonderful," said Wingrove, eyeing the sky.

"Are you going to desert me, like the others?"

"Not yet," Wingrove came erect. He picked up the bluebonnet, twiddled it idly between his fingers. "I'm being pulled two ways. Maybe I'm more stubborn than Bill and Jacques, or better disciplined, or less susceptible. Or maybe Melusine is slower, more gentle, and in no hurry to take me." His eyes met Searle's for the briefest moment. "I don't think she would like you to be left all alone."

"That's mighty white of her," said Searle sarcastically. "Especially since she's no guarantee that sooner or later I might not devise a way of boosting off by myself."

"You could never do that."

"I know it, and so do you. But she doesn't. These folk want to let their world travel incognito by shutting the traps of everyone who finds it. They've a neat play. No bombs, no bullets, no bloodshed. All they need do is offer a guy his heart's desire—and shut him up by pressure of a woman's lips."

"Ah!" sighed Wingrove. "What a beautiful fate."

"IT'S not funny," snapped

Searle, openly irritated. "It's serious. It's effective sabotage of Earth's plans. You know what is happening and why it is happening.

You know you are being grossly deceived—and yet this Melusine still appeals to you?"

"And how?"

"Knowing all the time that she is not exactly as you see her? That what you do see is reflected cunningly from the depths of your own mind?"

"It makes no difference. I can only go by how she looks. There's no other basis for judgment. She looks to me like the epitome of all I've ever wanted, even in her most insignificant habits, her smallest gestures and mannerisms. She couldn't suit me better if specially made to my specification."

"You dumb monkey!" said Searle. "She is specially made to your specification."

"I know," Unexpectedly, Wingrove hit back. "Could you want anything better than what you want the most?"

"Leave me out of this," Searle countered. "You're the lovesick gump, not me." He resumed his packing. "By hokey, they are even stronger than I'd thought, cleverer, more cunning, more expert."

"You don't know the half of it," Wingrove assured. "You should try a taste for yourself. Melusine has a friend named Nivetta whom she could bring along to meet you and—"

"So that's why she's been slow and gentle," rasped Searle. "That's why she's let you stick around a bit. She wants both birds! Not just

you, but you and me! She'll be content when there's nothing here but an empty ship, rotting like a skeleton under the sun."

"Oh, I don't know, Cap. We've planted for twelve months anyway. After a while, persuasion might work the other way and we can take them—"

"You'll never get them back to Earth," declared Searle, positively. "Nor see it yourself, either. Not ever again." He went closer, speaking earnestly. "Look, Reed, we've found a bonanza loaded with uranium. Discovering such items is our job for which we are equipped and paid. Reporting such a discovery to Earth is our bounden duty. If we fail, if we lose ourselves and never turn up, it may be anything from fifty to five hundred years before another Earth ship rediscovers the place. You realize all that?"

"You bet I do."

"Then you will also realize that since these half-pints can *fake* our speech-patterns—whatever that may mean—and discern our mind-pictures, they can also detect our purposes, our motives. If they don't approve of them, as well they may not, their best move is to destroy us or, at least, prevent our return. A ship is of no use without its crew. They have only to take away the crew—and the ship becomes a lump of junk corroding somewhere in the cosmos. It rots away and Earth's schemes go with it."

"Better for the ship to rot rather than its crew," contributed a voice.

Searle whirled around on one heel.

It was Maguire, red-capped, green-clothed and slightly over four feet high.

THREE were a dozen shorties with Maguire, some male, some female. Searle recognized Rifkin standing at one side of the group, also Mab clinging possessively to Maguire's arm. The entire bunch now came almost up to Maguire's shoulders instead of a little above his waist as formerly.

Two liquid-eyed creatures on the left went toward Wingrove, moving with the sprightly grace of hallel dancers. One put her tiny hand in his huge paw.

"Melusine," said Wingrove, looking at Searle.

Searle took no notice. Edging closer to the ship's airlock, he spoke to Maguire. "You've shrunk. You're still shrinking. You're going down into your boots."

"I know it," said Maguire. "This world does things to you if you aren't shielded by metal most of the time." He shrugged his indifference. "Do I care? I do not! I'm being reduced to proper size instead of staying big and ugly. So is Jacques. So is Reed. So are you as long as you hang around outside the ship."

Putting a careful foot on the bottom rung of the ladder, Searle readied himself for a quick move.

"I'm having fun while I'm young

enough to enjoy it," Maguire went on. "It's doing me good and it's doing nobody else any harm, so I'm going to keep on having it. Just for a start I've become engaged to Mah."

"Congratulations," said Searle, sardonically. His mind busied itself with the question of whether he could take Maguire in one swift snatch, toss him headlong through the lock and into the ship. Also whether he could trust Wingrove to follow of his own accord. Three would be enough to get the boat home. The missing Drouillard could be dug up by some later vessel and rogmarched out of the mess. His big hand tightened on an upper rung.

"He schemes to grab you!" warned Rikin.

Maguire grinned and asked Searle, "What's the use of plotting when they can *fake* you all the time?"

Relaxing his grip, Searle growled, "What have you come for?" He kept his attention on Maguire, avoided looking at the others.

"Jacques has got engaged too. So we're having a celebration. Having celebrations is a frequent amusement here. We want you along."

"Why?"

"Why not? No sense in you squatting in the ship holding communion with yourself while everyone else is swimming in joy. What good will that do you? Come on, Cap, we want you along, so how about—?"

"I want you two along," Searle interjected. "And you'd better come fast. I can still be persuaded not to make entries in the log that'll cause both of you to be shot out of the service—but my patience is running dry."

"Now there's a real threat," Maguire scoffed. "I can be drummed out of the ranks. The mere thought of it grieves me. It will grieve Jacques as much—or as little. He's planning to marry Peg and run a little joint called Cookery Nook. We're going to eat fresh food instead of powdered proteins and vitamin pills. We're going to drink mead instead of distilled water. We're going to sing songs and forget all about scout vessel S7D." His eyes slid sidewise at Wingrove. "So will Reed before long, if he knows what's good for him." The eyes returned to Searle. "Give up the fight, Cap, and be a willing loser."

"You can go to blue blazes!" declared Searle.

A dozen pair of sharp, shiny Little eyes went over him before they took him at his word and went away. Sitting on the bottom rung of the ladder, elbows on knees, his head between his hands, he stared fixedly at the grass between his feet and the fading bluebonnet to one side.

Maguire went, and Mah, and Rikin and the rest. He knew that Wingrove also had gone, with Melusine and her companion. He was

alone, terribly alone. With the useless bulk of 87D behind him, he sat there brooding, unmoving, a long, long time.

HE spent the next twenty-two days in his own company with his dessicated foods, his distilled water and utter silence. He spent most of this time entering the ship's log, mooching around a small radius, meditating bitterly, and playing with a friendly bronze beetle that could neither hear nor speak.

By the twenty-second day he was fed up. He sat in precisely the same position as they had left him many days before, on the bottom rung of the ladder, elbows on knees, head between hands. Even the beetle had gone on some mysterious errand of its own.

A slight rustling in the grass. His eyes raised a fraction, saw pointed green shoes with silver buttons. They were tiny and dainty.

"Beat it!" His voice was hoarse.

"Look at me."

"Go away!"

"Look at me." Her tones did not have the bell-like tinkling quality of the other's voices. She spoke softly and tenderly, in a way he had heard before.

"Go away, I tell you."

"You are not afraid of me . . . Walter?"

He shivered as memories flooded upon him. Unwillingly, reluctantly, his eyes came up. His vision became fixed on her tiny figure, her tiny,

bright-eyed face, and saw neither as they really were. He saw a honey-blond, brown-eyed, with full, generous lips. He arose slowly, his gaze still locked upon hers. Perspiration was shining on his forehead. His hands were bunched as he held them close at his sides.

"Betty died in a Moon-ship crash. I knew you would look like her . . . exactly like her . . . you witch!" He swallowed hard, trying to let his brain retain command over his eyes. It was not easy. "But I know you are not Betty. You cannot be."

"Of course you know." She moved nearer, slim-thighed, slim-hipped; even her walk characteristic of the walk he once had known. "I am, Nivetta—today. But tomorrow my name can be another." Her hand went up to tuck a dark gold curl behind her ear, an old familiar gesture that did things to him. "If I am the picture you retain, the memory you treasure, am I not indeed both the memory and the picture? For always? Am I not . . . Betty?"

HE put his hand over his eyes to shut out the sight of her. But then her scent reached him, the scent he knew. His words came out in a flood.

"I did not tell Wingrove. I hoped he would discover it for himself and thus confirm my own ideas. I wandered around a little while he was going on his own walks, and one day I found a dolmen, a great stone fairy-table. The four hearts en-

graved upon it still showed a stalk from their center. I could see at a glance that it was a four-leaved clover."

Her odor was strong now, and close to him. He was talking like a man fighting for time.

"Then I remembered that Mab and Peg are favored names among your kind, and that Morgaine was better known as Morgan le Fay. I remembered it is legendary among us that in the far-off, almost forgotten times your people went away because they were resented, not wanted. They went away, taking with them the seeds of their herbs, fruits and flowers, their incomprehensible arts, their misunderstood sciences which many still call magic. They went in some strange manner of their own, looking for another friendlier world resembling the one they knew of old, seeking the rainbow's end."

She did not speak as he finished, but there was a butterfly touch upon his hairy hand. Her forefinger linked with his thumb. It was an entirely personal gesture which only he and she had known. It was, it must be—Betty!

A rush of nostalgic feeling overcame him. He gave himself up to it because surrender was easier than resistance and more satisfying. His loneliness finished, his solitude ended, he looked straight into her eyes and saw only the eyes so well remembered.

Together they walked through the

fields and the flowers, away from the ship, away from that far distant world of forgotten things.

* * *

ABOUT the self-confidence and bumptiousness of the four-man crew of scout vessel 114K there could be no doubt at all. Tumbling hurriedly out of the lock, they sniffed the fresh air, patted the good earth, celebrated their successful landing with raucous shouts and some horseplay.

Two of them found a crumbling pile of metal, vaguely cylindrical in outline, a few hundred yards to the north. They investigated it with no more than perfunctory interest, kicked some of its shapeless, powdery pieces, went leap-frogging back to their ship.

"Man, are we lucky!" exulted Gustav Berners, a big Swede, speaking to Captain James Hayward. He chuckled deep down in his chest as he watched the other two members of the crew indulging in an impromptu wrestling match. "When that space storm tossed us umpteen months beyond the limits of exploration, I thought we were gones. Who'd have guessed we'd fall right into the lap of a world like this? Just like home. I feel at home already."

"Home," echoed Hayward. "The sweetest word in any space-jerk's life."

"Enough uranium to last a million years," Berners went on. "Com-

ing over that hill the counters jiggled like we were already worth a million credits apiece. And it's to be had for the taking. No bull-headed aborigines to fight for it."

Hayward said, "Don't go by first appearances."

"Here's a first appearance," announced one of the wrestling pair, ceasing to maul his buddy.

Excitedly they clustered around the gnome-like figure which had come upon the scene, taking in his human shape, tiny stature, crimson cap, green clothes and silver trimmings.

"They're small," commented Hayward. "Semi-civilized pygmies. I guessed as much from that toy-town we glimpsed just before we made our bump." Offering the gnome a cordial smile, he pointed to himself and said, "James Hayward."

GIVING him a quick, darting glance, the other made no reply. They filled in the silence by introducing themselves one by one. Motionless except for his bright, agile optics, the other leaned upon his gnarly stick, eyeing them sharply and ruminating.

After a while, he said, "Walt-skin," in a thin, reedy voice.

"Hah!" said one of the crew. "Let's call him Walter." With humor unconsciously prophetic, he sang, "Walter, Walter, lead me to the altar."

"He can talk, at any rate," observed Hayward. "Now we won't

have to play snake-arms trying to make him understand. We can learn his language or teach him ours."

"Neither will be necessary," assured the newcomer, with perfect diction.

They were mutually dumbfounded.

After they had got over it, Berners whispered to Hayward, "This is going to make things dead easy. It will be like taking candy from a kitten."

"You're getting mixed," said Hayward. "You mean like taking bad fish from a child." He grinned and turned his attention to the dwarf. "How come you know our language?"

"I do not know it. I can *fake* it. How can people communicate if they cannot *fake* each other's speech-patterns?"

That was too tough for Hayward. He shrugged it off, saying, "I don't get it. I've been around plenty, but this is a new one on me." He looked hopefully toward the distant town, pondering the chances of a little relaxation. "Well, we'll have a tale to tell when we get back."

"When you get where?" asked Waltskin. The sun glowed on the peculiar four-heart sign ornamenting his silver buttons.

"When we get back," Hayward repeated.

"Oh, yes," said the other, with subtle change of emphasis. "When you get back."

He used his gnarly stick to de-

capitate something resembling a daisy and waited for the next conversational move leading toward the inevitable end. And in due time his eyes glittered as he conducted the first victim away.

THE END

Hollywood Wakes Up!

EVERY professional and amateur science-fictionist chewed his nails to the elbows waiting for the release of *Destination Moon*, Hollywood's magnum opus in the fantasy field. And in turn Hollywood is jumping around like a cat on a hot stove waiting to see what sort of a reception the film achieved.

If publicity is any guide to coming events, science-fiction is due for a long awaited acceptance at Hollywood's hands. After ignoring the field for so long, the movie colony is at last realizing that there are plenty of intelligent people in the world who want to see some of the magic and artistry the movie capital is capable of if used sensibly for a change.

Fan and professional magazines are alert to the science-fiction boom and have in some respects guided the selection of the major studios which all seem to have numerous "properties" awaiting the "go" signal.

Hollywood has done some fantasy and some science-fiction in the past. None of it however is particularly outstanding. A few foreign films, notably German and French have been produced soundly. But it can be truthfully said that *Destination Moon* will be the first real challenge to the science-fictionist. Hitherto the movie idea of science-fiction has been strictly space opera with ray guns all over the place and scantily clad

girls being attacked by brutal, forty armed Mercurian monsters.

Destination Moon however is a calm, scientific treatment of a journey to the Moon, and just as things really are, because of that fact, it has a subtle thrilling effect far exceeding anything the bug-eyed monster crowd could do. Supervised by trained engineers, advised by Hainlein, carefully shot with thoroughly sound technological treatment, the film can't help but be good. After all we regard certain phases of science-fiction (the realistic school) merely as extrapolations into the future through the use of present-day knowledge. Adhering to this idea, projecting scientific advances which are bound to come within our lifetime, will make this film outstanding.

While we waited hopefully for the release of *Destination Moon*, we didn't expect it to be a miracle, but compared with anything so far done it was extraordinary. Better films will follow, but this is a precursor, a glimpse into the very near future, with solid concrete knowledge backing it up all the way. Before we take the final trip, you can bet your bottom dollar that we're going to see the first rocket flight to Luna—and maybe we'll follow the inevitable secondary flights which will follow it. Luna, here we come—vicariously, if necessary. . . .

THE HUNGRY HOUSE

By Robert Black

It was silly to be afraid of the house.
And yet it wasn't really the house — it was the
evil thing living there — hungry for tenants . . .



THE HUNGRY HOUSE

By Robert Bloch

It was silly to be afraid of the house. And yet it wasn't really the house — it was the evil thing living there — hungry for tenants . . .



AT first there were just the two of them—he and she, together. That's the way it was when they bought the house.

Then it came. Perhaps it was there all the time; waiting for them in the house. At any rate, it was there now. And there was nothing they could do.

Moving was out of the question. They'd taken a five-year lease, secretly congratulating themselves on

the low rental. It would be absurd to complain to the agent about it, and impossible to explain to their friends. For that matter, they had nowhere else to go; they had searched for months to find a home.

Besides, at first neither he nor she cared to admit that they were aware of its presence. But both of them knew it was there.

She felt it the very first evening, in the bedroom. She was sitting in



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She felt it the very first evening, in the bedroom. She was sitting in

front of the high, old-fashioned boudoir mirror, combing her hair. They hadn't settled all their things yet, and she didn't trouble to dust the place very thoroughly. In consequence the mirror was cloudy. And the light above it flickered.

So at first she thought it was just a trick of shadows. Some flaw in the glass perhaps. The wavering outline behind her seemed to blur the reflection oddly, and she frowned in distaste. Then she began to experience what she often called her "married feeling" — the peculiar awareness which usually denoted her husband's entrance to a room she occupied.

He must be standing behind her now. He must have come in quietly, without saying anything. Perhaps he was going to put his arms around her, surprise her, startle her. Hence the shadow on the mirror.

She turned, ready to greet him.

The room was empty. And still the odd reflection persisted, together with the sensation of a presence at her back.

She shrugged, moved her head, and made a little face at herself, in the mirror. As a smile it was a failure, because the warped glass and the poor light seemed to distort her grin into something alien — into a smile that was not altogether a composition of her own face and features.

Well, it had been a fatiguing ordeal, this moving business. She flicked a brush through her hair

and tried to dismiss the problem.

NEVERTHELESS she felt a surge of relief when he suddenly entered the bedroom. For a moment she thought of telling him, then decided not to worry him over her "nerves."

He was more outspoken. It was the following morning that the incident occurred. He came rushing out of the bathroom, his face bleeding from a razor-cut on the left cheek.

"Is that your idea of being funny?" he demanded, in the petulant, little-boy fashion she found so engrossing. "Sneaking in behind me and making faces in the mirror? Gave me an awful start—look at this nick I sliced on myself."

She sat up in bed.

"But darling, I haven't been making faces at you. I didn't stir from this bed since you got up."

"Oh." He shook his head, his frown fading into a second set of wrinkles expressing bewilderment. "Oh, I see."

"What is it?" She suddenly threw off the covers and sat on the edge of the bed, wriggling her toes and peering at him earnestly.

"Nothing," he murmured. "Nothing at all. Just thought I saw you, or somebody, looking over my shoulder in the mirror. All of a sudden, you know. It must be those damned lights. Got to get some bulbs in town today."

He patted his cheek with a towel

and turned away. She took a deep breath.

"I had the same feeling last night," she confessed, then bit her lip.

"You did?"

"It's probably just the lights, as you said, darling."

"Uh-huh." He was suddenly preoccupied. "That must be it. I'll make sure and bring those new bulbs."

"You'd better. Don't forget, the gang is coming down for the house-warming on Saturday."

Saturday proved to be a long time in coming. In the interim both of them had several experiences which served to upset their minds much more than they cared to admit.

The second morning, after he had left for work, she went out in back and looked at the garden. The place was a mess—half an acre of land, all those trees, the weeds everywhere, and the dead leaves of autumn dancing slowly around the old house. She stood off on a little knoll and contemplated the grave gray gables of another century. Suddenly she felt lonely here. It wasn't only the isolation, the feeling of being half a mile from the nearest neighbor, down a deserted dirt road. It was more as though she were an intruder here—an intruder upon the past. The cold breeze, the dying trees, the sullen sky were welcome; they belonged to the house. She was the outsider, because she was young, because she was alive.

She felt it all, but did not think it. To acknowledge her sensations would be to acknowledge fear. Fear of being alone. Or, worse still, fear of *not* being alone.

Because, as she stood there, the back door closed.

Oh, it was the autumn wind, all right. Even though the door didn't bang, or slam shut. It merely closed. But that was the wind's work, it had to be. There was nobody in the house, nobody to close the door.

SHE felt in her housedress pocket for the door key, then shrugged as she remembered leaving it on the kitchen sink. Well, she hadn't planned to go inside yet anyway. She wanted to look over the yard, look over the spot where the garden had been and where she fully intended a garden to bloom next spring. She had measurements to make, and estimates to take, and a hundred things to do here outside.

And yet, when the door closed, she knew she had to go in. Something was trying to shut her out, shut her out of her own house, and that would never do. Something was fighting against her, fighting against all idea of change. She had to fight back.

So she marched up to the door, rattled the knob, found herself locked out as she expected. The first round was lost. But there was always the window.

The kitchen window was eye-level

in height, and a small cruse served to bring it within easy reach. The window was open a good four inches and she had no trouble inserting her hands to raise it further.

She tugged.

Nothing happened. The window must be stuck. But it wasn't stuck; she'd just opened it before going outside and it opened quite easily; besides, they'd tried all the windows and found them in good operating condition.

She tugged again. This time the window raised a good six inches and then—something slipped. The window came down like the blade of a guillotine, and she got her hands out just in time. She hit her lip, sent strength through her shoulders, raised the window once more.

And this time she stared into the pane. The glass was transparent, ordinary window glass. She'd washed it just yesterday and she knew it was clean. There had been no blur, no shadow, and certainly no movement.

But there was movement now. Something cloudy, something obscenely opaque, peered out of the window, peered out of itself and pressed the window down against her. Something matched her strength to shut her out.

Suddenly, hysterically, she realized that she was staring at her own reflection through the shadows of the trees. Of course, it had to be her own reflection. And there was no reason for her to close her eyes

and sob as she tugged the window up and half-tumbled her way into the kitchen.

She was inside, and alone. Quite alone. Nothing to worry about. Nothing to worry him about. She wouldn't tell him.

He wouldn't tell her, either. Friday afternoon, when she took the car and went into town for groceries and liquor in preparation for tomorrow's party, he stayed home from the office and arranged the final details of settling down.

That's why he carried up all the garment bags to the attic—to store the summer clothes, get them out of the way. And that's how he happened to open the little cubicle under the front gable. He was looking for the attic closet; he'd put down the bags and started to work along the wall with a flashlight. Then he noticed the door and the padlock.

DUST and rust told their own story; nobody had come this way for a long, long time. He thought again of Hacker, the glib real-estate agent who'd handled the rental of the place. "Been vacant several years and needs a little fixing up," Hacker had said. From the looks of it, nobody had lived here for a coon's age. All the better; he could force the lock with a common file.

He went downstairs for the file and returned quickly, noting as he did so the heavy attic dust. Appar-

ently the former occupants had left in something of a hurry—debris was scattered everywhere, and swaths and swirls scored the dust to indicate that belongings had been dragged and hauled and swept along in a haphazard fashion.

Well, he had all winter to straighten things out, and right now he'd settle for storing the garment bags. Clipping the flashlight to his belt, he bent over the lock, file in hand, and tried his skill at breaking and entering.

The lock sprung. He tugged at the door, opened it, inhaled a gust of mouldy dampness, then raised the flash and directed the beam into the long, narrow closet.

A thousand silver slivers stabbled at his eyeballs. Golden, gleaming fire seared his pupils. He jerked the flashlight back, sent the beam upwards. Again, lances of light entered his eyes.

Suddenly he adjusted his vision and comprehension. He stood peering into a room full of mirrors. They hung from cords, lay in corners, stood along the walls in rows.

There was a tall, stately full-length mirror, set in a door; a pair of plate-glass ovals, inset in old-fashioned dresser-tops; a panel glass, and even a complete, dismantled bathroom medicine cabinet similar to the one they had just installed. And the floor was lined with hand-mirrors of all sizes and shapes. He noted an ornate silver-handled mirror straight from a wom-

an's dressing table; behind it stood the vanity-mirror removed from the table itself. And there were pocket mirrors, mirrors from purse-compacts, mirrors of every size and shape. Against the far wall stood a whole series of looking-glass slabs that appeared to have been mounted at one time in a bedroom wall.

He gazed at half a hundred silvered surfaces, gazed at a half a hundred reflections of his own bewildered face.

AND he thought again of Hacker, of their inspection of the house. He had noted the absence of a medicine cabinet at the time, but Hacker had glossed over it. Somehow he hadn't realized that there were no mirrors of any sort in the house—of course, there was no furniture, but still one might expect a door panel in a place this old.

No mirrors? Why? And why were they all stacked away up here, under lock and key?

It was interesting. His wife might like some of these—that silver-handled beauty mirror, for example. He'd have to tell her about this.

He stepped cautiously into the closet, dragging the garment bags after him. There didn't seem to be any clothes-pole here, or any hooks. He could put some up in a jiffy, though. He piled the bags in a heap, stooping, and the flashlight glittered on a thousand surfaces, sent facets of fire into his face.

Then the fire faded. The silver surfaces darkened oddly. Of course, his reflection covered them now. His reflection, and something darker. Something smoky and swirling, something that was a part of the mouldy dampness, something that choked the closet with its presence. It was behind him—no, at one side—no, in front of him—all around him—it was growing and growing and blotting him out—it was making him sweat and tremble and now it was making him gasp and scuttle out of the closet and slam the door and press against it with all his waning strength, and its name was—

Claustrophobia. That was it. Just claustrophobia, a fancy name for nerves. A man gets nervous when he's cooped up in a small space. For that matter, a man gets nervous when he looks at himself too long in a mirror. Let alone fifty mirrors!

He stood there, shaking, and to keep his mind occupied, keep his mind off what he had just half-seen, half-felt, half-known, he thought about mirrors for a moment. About looking into mirrors. Women did it all the time. Men were different.

Men, himself included, seemed to be self-conscious about mirrors. He could remember going into a clothing-store and seeing himself in one of the complicated arrangements that afforded a side and rear view. What a shock that had been, the first time—and every time, for that

matter! A man looks different in a mirror. Not the way he imagines himself to be, knows himself to be. A mirror distorts. That's why men hum and sing and whistle while they shave. To keep their minds off their reflections. Otherwise they'd go crazy. What was the name of that Greek mythological character who was in love with his own image? Narcissus, that was it. Staring into a pool for hours.

Women could do it, though. Because women never saw themselves, actually. They saw an idealization, a vision. Powder, rouge, lipstick, mascara, eye-shadow, brilliantine, or merely an emptiness to which these elements must be applied. Women were a little crazy to begin with, anyway. Hadn't she said something the other night about seeing him in her mirror when he wasn't there?

PERHAPS he'd better not tell her, after all. At least, not until he checked with the real-estate agent, Hacker. He wanted to find out about this business, anyway. Something was wrong, somewhere. Why had the previous owners stored all the mirrors up here?

He began to walk back through the attic, forcing himself to go slowly, forcing himself to think of something, anything, except the fright he'd had in the room of reflections.

Reflect on something. Reflections. Who's afraid of the big bad reflection? Another myth, wasn't it?

Vampires. They had no reflections. "Tell me the truth now, Hacker. The people who built this house—were they vampires?"

That was a pleasant thought. That was a pleasant thought to carry downstairs in the afternoon twilight, to hug to your bosom in the gloom while the floors creaked and the shutters banged and the night came down in the house of shadows where something peered around the corners and grinned at you in the mirrors on the walls.

He sat there waiting for her to come home, and he switched on all the lights, and he put the radio on too and thanked God he didn't have a television set because there was a screen and the screen made a reflection and the reflection might be something he didn't want to see.

But there was no more trouble that evening, and by the time she came home with her packages he had himself under control. So they ate and talked quite naturally—oh, quite naturally, and if it was listening it wouldn't know they were both afraid.

They made their preparations for the party, and called up a few people on the phone, and just on the spur of the moment he suggested inviting Hacker, too. So that was done and they went to bed. The lights were all out and that meant the mirrors were dark, and he could sleep.

Only in the morning it was difficult to shave. And he caught her,

yes he caught her, putting on her makeup in the kitchen, using the little compact from her purse and carefully cupping her hands against reflections.

But he didn't tell her and she didn't tell him, and if it guessed their secrets, it kept silent.

He drove off to work and she made canapes, and if at times during the long, dark, dreary Saturday the house groaned and creaked and whispered, that was only to be expected.

THE house was quiet enough by the time he came home again, and somehow, that was worse. It was as though something were waiting for night to fall. That's why she dressed early, humming all the while she powdered and primped, swirling around in front of the mirror (you couldn't see too clearly if you swirled). That's why he mixed drinks before their hasty meal and saw to it that they both had several stiff ones (you couldn't see too clearly if you drank).

And then the guests tumbled in. The Teters, complaining about the winding back road through the hills. The Valliants, exclaiming over the antique panelling and the high ceilings. The Ehrs, whooping and laughing, with Vic remarking that the place looked like something designed by Charles Addams. That was a signal for a drink, and by the time Hacker and his wife arrived the blaring radio found ample compe-

tion from the voices of the guests.

He drank, and she drank, but they couldn't shut it out altogether. That remark about Charles Addams was bad, and there were other things. Little things. The Talmadges had brought flowers, and she went out to the kitchen to arrange them in a cut-glass vase. There were facets in the glass, and as she stood in the kitchen, momentarily alone, and filled the vase with water from the tap, the crystal darkened beneath her fingers, and something peered, reflected from the facets. She turned quickly, and she was all alone. All alone, holding a hundred naked eyes in her hands.

So she dropped the vase, and the Elsas and Talmadges and Hackers and Valliants trooped out to the kitchen, and he came too. Talmadge accused her of drinking and that was reason enough for another round. He said nothing, but got another vase for the flowers. And yet he must have known, because when somebody suggested a tour of the house, he put them off:

"We haven't straightened things out upstairs yet," he said. "It's a mess, and you'd be knocking into crates and stuff."

"Who's up there now?" asked Mrs. Teters, coming into the kitchen with her husband. "We just heard an awful crash."

"Something must have fallen over," the host suggested. But he didn't look at his wife as he spoke, and she didn't look at him.

"How about another drink?" she asked. She mixed and poured hurriedly, and before the glasses were half empty, he took over and fixed another round. Liquor helped to keep people talking and if they talked it would drown out other sounds.

The strategem worked. Gradually the group trickled back into the living room in twos and threes, and the radio blared and the laughter rose and the voices babbled to blot out the noises of the night.

He poured and she served, and both of them drank, but the alcohol had no effect. They moved carefully, as though their bodies were brittle glasses—glasses without bottom—waiting to be shattered by some sudden strident sound. Glasses hold liquor, but they never get drunk.

Their guests were not glasses, they drank and feared nothing, and the drinks took hold. People moved about, and in and out, and pretty soon Mr. Valliant and Mrs. Talmadge embarked on their own private tour of the house upstairs. It was irregular and unescorted, but fortunately nobody noticed either their departure or their absence. At least, not until Mrs. Talmadge came running downstairs and locked herself in the bathroom.

HER hostess saw her pass the doorway and followed her. She rapped on the bathroom door, gained admittance, and prepared to make discreet inquiries. None was

necessary. Mrs. Talmadge, weeping and wringing her hands, fell upon her.

"That was a filthy trick!" she sobbed. "Coming up and sneaking in on us. The dirty louse—I admit we were doing a little smooching, but that's all there was to it. And it isn't as though he didn't make enough passes at Gwen Hacker himself. What I want to know is, where did he get the beard? It frightened me out of my wits."

"What's all this?" she asked — knowing all the while what it was, and dreading the words to come.

"Jeff and I were in the bedroom, just standing there in the dark, I swear it, and all at once I looked up over my shoulder at the mirror because light began streaming in from the hall. Somebody had opened the door, and I could see the glass and this face. Oh, it was my husband all right, but he had a beard on and the way he came slinking in, glaring at us—"

Sobs choked off the rest. Mrs. Talmadge trembled so that she wasn't aware of the tremors which racked the frame of her hostess. She, for her part, strained to hear the rest. "—sneaked right out again before we could do anything, but wait till I get him home—scaring the life out of me and all because he's so crazy jealous — the look on his face in the mirror—"

She soothed Mrs. Talmadge. She comforted Mrs. Talmadge. She placated Mrs. Talmadge. And all the

while there was nothing to soothe or calm or placate her own agitation.

Still, both of them had restored a semblance of sanity by the time they ventured out into the hall to join the party—just in time to hear Mr. Talmadge's agitated voice booming out over the excited responses of the rest.

"So I'm standing there in the bathroom and this old witch comes up and starts making faces over my shoulder in the mirror. What gives here, anyway? What kind of a house you running here?"

He thought it was funny. So did the others. Most of the others. The host and hostess stood there, not daring to look at each other. Their smiles were cracking. Glass is brittle.

"I don't believe you" Gwen Hacker's voice. She'd had one, or perhaps three, too many. "I'm going up right now and see for myself." She winked at her host and moved towards the stairs.

"Hey, hold on!" He was too late. She swept, or wobbled, past him.

"Halloween pranks," said Talmadge, nudging him. "Old babe in a fancy hairdo. Saw her plain as day. What you cook up for us here, anyhow?"

He began to stammer something, anything, to halt the flood of foolish babbling. She moved close to him, wanting to listen, wanting to believe, wanting to do anything but think of Gwen Hacker upstairs, all

alone upstairs looking into a mirror and waiting to see—

THREE screams came then. Not sobs, not laughter, but screams. He took the stairs two at a time. Fat Mr. Hacker was right behind him, and the others straggled along, suddenly silent. There was the sound of feet clubbing the staircase, the sound of heavy breathing, and over everything the continuing high-pitched shriek of a woman confronted with terror too great to contain.

It oozed out of Gwen Hacker's voice, oozed out of her body as she staggered and half-fell into her husband's arms in the hall. The light was streaming out of the bathroom, and it fell upon the mirror that was empty of all reflection, fell upon her face that was empty of all expression.

They crowded around the Hackers—he and she were on either side and the others clustered in front—and they moved along the hall to her bedroom and helped Mr. Hacker stretch his wife out on the bed. She had passed out, and somebody murmured something about a doctor, and somebody else said no, never mind, she'll be all right in a minute, and somebody else said well, I think we'd better be getting along.

For the first time everybody seemed to be aware of the old house and the darkness, and the way the floors creaked and the windows rattled and the shutters banged. Ev-

eryone was suddenly sober, solicitous, and extremely anxious to leave.

Hacker bent over his wife, chafing her wrists, forcing her to swallow water, watching her whimper her way out of emptiness. The host and hostess silently procured hats and coats and listened to expressions of polite regret, hasty farewells, and poorly formulated pretenses of, "Had a marvelous time, darling."

Teters, Vaillants, Talmadges were swallowed up in the night. He and she went back upstairs, back to the bedroom and the Hackers. It was too dark in the hall, and too light in the bedroom. But there they were, waiting. And they didn't wait long.

Mrs. Hacker sat up suddenly and began to talk. To her husband, to them,

"I saw her," she said. "Don't tell me I'm crazy, I saw her! Standing on tiptoe behind me, looking right into the mirror. With the same blue ribbon in her hair, the one she wore the day she—"

"Please, dear," said Mr. Hacker.

She didn't please. "But I saw her. Mary Lou! She made a face at me in the mirror, and she's dead, you know she's dead, she disappeared three years ago and they never did find the body—"

"Mary Lou Dempster." Hacker was a fat man. He had two chins. Both of them wobbled.

"She played around here, you know she did, and Wilma Dempster

told her to stay away, she knew all about this house, but she wouldn't and now—oh, her face!"

MORE sohs. Hacker patted her on the shoulder. He looked as though he could stand a little shoulder-patting himself. But nobody obliged. He stood there, she stood there, still waiting. Waiting for the rest.

"Tell them," said Mrs. Hacker. "Tell them the truth."

"All right, but I'd better get you home."

"I'll wait. I want you to tell them. You must, now."

Hacker sat down heavily. His wife leaned against his shoulder. The two waited another moment. Then it came.

"I don't know how to begin, how to explain," said fat Mr. Hacker. "It's probably my fault, of course, but I didn't know. All this foolishness about haunted houses—nobody believes that stuff any more, and all it does is push property values down, so I didn't say anything. Can you blame me?"

"I saw her face," whispered Mrs. Hacker.

"I know. And I should have told you. About the house, I mean. Why it hasn't rented for twenty years. Old story in the neighborhood, and you'd have heard it sooner or later anyway, I guess."

"Get on with it," said Mrs. Hacker. She was suddenly strong again and he, with his wobbling

chins, was weak.

Host and hostess stood before them, brittle as glass, as the words poured out; poured out and filled them to overflowing. He and she, watching and listening, filling up with the realization, with the knowledge, with that for which they had waited.

It was the Bellman house they were living in, the house Job Bellman built for his bride back in the sixties; the house where his bride had given birth to Laura and taken death in exchange. And Job Bellman had toiled through the seventies as his daughter grew to girlhood, rested in complacent retirement during the eighties as Laura Bellman blossomed into the reigning beauty of the county—some said the state, but then flattery came quickly to men's lips in those days.

There were men aplenty, coming and going through that decade; passing through the hall in polished boots, bowing and stroking brilliantined mustachios, smirking at old Job, grinning at the servants, and gazing in moonstruck adoration at Laura.

Laura took it all as her right-
ful due, but land's sakes, she'd never think of it, no, not while Paga was still alive, and no, she couldn't, she was much too young to marry, and why, she'd never heard of such a thing, she'd always thought it was so much nicer just being friends—

Moonlight, dances, parties, hay-

rides, sleighrides, candy, flowers, gifts, tokens, cecillion balls, punch, fans, beauty spots, dressmakers, curlers, mandolins, cycling, and the years that whirled away. And then, one day, old Job dead in the four-poster bed upstairs, and the Doctor came and the Minister, and then the Lawyer, hock-hack-hacking away with his dry, precise little cough, and his talk of inheritance and estate and annual income.

THEN she was all alone, just she and the servants and the mirrors. Laura and her mirrors. Mirrors in the morning, and the careful inspection, the scrutiny that began the day. Mirrors at night before the caller arrived, before the carriage came, before she whirled away to another triumphal entry, another fan-fluttering, piroetting descent of the staircase. Mirrors at dawn, absorbing the smiles, listening to the secrets, the tale of the evening's triumph.

"Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?"

Mirrors told her the truth, mirrors did not lie, mirrors did not paw or clutch or whisper or demand in return for acknowledgement of beauty.

Years passed, but mirrors did not age, did not change. And Laura did not age. The callers were fewer and some of them were oddly altered. They seemed older, somehow. And yet how could that be? For Laura Bellman was still young. The

mirrors said so, and they always told the truth. Laura spent more and more time with the mirrors. Pondering, searching for wrinkles, tinting and curling her long hair. Smiling, fluttering eyelashes, making deliciously delicate little moans. Swirling daintily, posturing before her own perfection.

Sometimes, when the callers came, she sent word that she was not at home. It seemed silly, somehow, to leave the mirrors. And after a while, there weren't many callers to worry about. Servants came and went, some of them died, but there were always new ones. Laura and the mirrors remained. The nineties were truly gay, but in a way other people wouldn't understand. How Laura laughed, rocking back and forth on the bed, sharing her giddy secrets with the glass!

The years fairly flew by, but Laura merely laughed. She giggled and tittered when the servants spoke to her, and it was easier now to take her meals on a tray in her room. Because there was something wrong with the servants, and with Doctor Turner who came to visit her and who was always being tiresome about going away for a rest to a lovely home.

They thought she was getting old, but she wasn't—the mirrors didn't lie. She wore the false teeth and the wig to please the others, the outsiders, but she didn't really need them. The mirrors told her she was unchanged. They talked to her now,

the mirrors did, and she never said a word. Just sat nodding and swaying before them in the room reeking of powder and *patchouli*, stroking her throat and listening to the mirrors telling her how beautiful she was and what a belle she would be if she would only waste her beauty on the world. But she'd never leave here, never; she and the mirrors would always be together.

AND then came the day they tried to take her away, and they actually laid hands upon her—upon her, Laura Bellman, the most exquisitely beautiful woman in the world! Was it any wonder that she fought, clawed and kicked and whined, and struck out so that one of the servants crashed headlong into the beautiful glass and struck his foolish head and died, his nasty blood staining the image of her perfection?

Of course it was all a stupid mistake and it wasn't her fault, and Doctor Turner told the magistrate so when he came to call. Laura didn't have to see him, and she didn't have to leave the house. But they always locked the door to her room now, and they took away all her mirrors.

They took away all her mirrors!

They left her alone, caged up, a scrawny, wizened, wrinkled old woman with no reflection. They took the mirrors away and made her old; old, and ugly, and afraid.

The night they did it, she cried.

She cried and hobbled around the room, stumbling blindly in a tear-some tear of nothingness.

That's when she realized she was old, and nothing could save her. Because she came up against the window and leaned her wrinkled forehead against the cold, cold glass. The light came from behind her and as she drew away she could see her reflection in the window.

The window—it was a mirror, too! She gazed into it, gazed long and lovingly at the tear-streaked face of the fantastically rouged and painted old harridan, gazed at the corpse-countenance readied for the grave by a mad embalmer.

Everything whirled. It was her house, she knew every inch of it, from the day of her birth onwards the house was a part of her. It was her room, she had lived here for ever and ever. But this—this obscenity—was not her face. Only a mirror could show her that, and there would never be a mirror for her again. For an instant she gazed at the truth and then, mercifully, the gleaming glass of the window-pane altered and once again she gazed at Laura Bellman, the proudest beauty of them all. She drew herself erect, stepped back, and whirled into a dance. She danced forward, a prim self-conscious smile on her lips. Danced into the window-pane, half-through it, until razored splinters of glass tore her scrawny throat.

That's how she died and that's

how they found her. The Doctor came, and the servants and the lawyer did what must be done. The house was sold, then sold again. It fell into the hands of a rental agency. There were tenants, but not for long. They had trouble with mirrors.

A man died—of a heart attack, they said—while adjusting his necktie before the bureau one evening. Grotesque enough, but he had complained to people in the town about strange happenings, and his wife babbled to everyone.

A school-teacher who rented the place in the twenties “passed away” in circumstances which Doctor Turner had never seen fit to relate. He had gone to the rental agency and begged them to take the place off the market: that was almost unnecessary, for the Bellman home had its reputation firmly established by now.

Whether or not Mary Lou Dempster had disappeared here would never be known. But the little girl had last been seen a year ago on the road leading to the house and although a search had been made and nothing discovered, there was talk aplenty.

Then the new heirs had stepped in, briskly, with their pooh-poohs and their harsh dismissals of advice, and the house had been cleaned and put up for rental.

So he and she had come to live here—with it. And that was the story, all of the story.

MURKIN HAD put his arm around Gwen, harrumphed, and helped her rise. He was apologetic, he was shame-faced, he was deferential. His eyes never met those of his tenant.

He barred the doorway. “We’re getting out of here, right now,” he said. “Lease or no lease.”

“That can be arranged. But—I can’t find you another place to-night, and tomorrow’s Sunday—”

“We’ll pack and get out of here tomorrow,” she spoke up. “Go to a hotel, anywhere. But we’re leaving.”

“I’ll call you tomorrow,” said Murkin. “I’m sure everything will be all right. After all, you’ve stayed here through the week and nothing, I mean nobody has—”

His words trailed off. There was no point in saying any more. The Hackers left and they were all alone. Just the two of them.

Just the *three* of them, that is.

But now they—he and she—were too tired to care. The inevitable letdown, product of overindulgence and over-excitement was at hand.

They said nothing, for there was nothing to say. They heard nothing, for the house—and it—maintained a sombre silence.

She went to her room and undressed. He began to walk around the house. First he went to the kitchen and opened a drawer next to the sink. He took a hammer and smashed the kitchen mirror.

Tinkle-tinkle! And then a crash!

That was the mirror in the hall. Then upstairs, to the bathroom. Crash and clink of broken glass in the medicine cabinet. Then a smash as he shattered the panel in his room. And now he came to her bedroom and swung the hammer against the huge oval of the vanity, shattering it to bits.

He wasn't cut, wasn't excited, wasn't upset. And the mirrors were gone. Every last one of them was gone.

They looked at each other for a moment. Then he switched off the lights, tumbled into bed beside her, and sought sleep.

The night wore on.

IT was all a little silly in the daylight. But she looked at him again in the morning, and he went into his room and hauled out the suitcases. By the time she had breakfast ready he was already laying his clothes out on the bed. She got up after eating and took her own clothing from the drawers and hangers and racks and hooks. Soon he'd go up to the attic and get the garment bags. The movers could be called tomorrow, or as soon as they had a destination in mind.

The house was quiet. If it knew their plans, it wasn't acting. The day was gloomy and they kept the lights off without speaking — although both of them knew it was because of the window-panes and the story of the reflection. He could have smashed the window glass of

course, but it was all a little silly. And they'd be out of here shortly.

Then they heard the noise. Trickling, bubbling. A splashing sound. It came from beneath their feet. She gasped.

"Water-pipe — in the basement," he said, smiling and taking her by the shoulders.

"Better take a look." She moved towards the stairs.

"Why should you go down there? I'll tend to it."

But she shook her head and pulled away. It was her penance for gasping. She had to show she wasn't afraid. She had to show him—and it, too.

"Wait a minute," he said. "I'll get the pipe-wrench. It's in the trunk in the car." He went out the back door. She stood irresolute, then headed for the cellar stairs. The splashing was getting louder. The burst pipe was flooding the basement. It made a funny noise, like laughter.

He could hear it even when he walked up the driveway and opened the trunk of the car. These old houses always had something wrong with them; he might have known it. Burst pipes and—

Yes. He found the wrench. He walked back to the door, listening to the water gurgle, listening to his wife scream.

She was screaming! Screaming down in the basement, screaming down in the dark.

He ran, swinging the heavy

wrench. He clumped down the stairs, down into the darkness, the screams tearing up at him. She was caught, it had her, she was struggling with it but it was strong, too strong, and the light came streaming in on the pool of water beside the shattered pipe and in the reflection he saw her face and the blackness of other faces swirling around her and holding her.

He brought the wrench up, brought it down on the black blur, hammering and hammering and hammering until the screaming died away. And then he stopped and looked down at her. The dark blur had faded away into the reflection of the water—the reflection that had evoked it. But she was still there, and she was still, and she would be still forever now. Only the water was getting red, where her head rested in it. And the end of the wrench was red, too.

For a moment he started to tell her about it, and then he realized she was gone. Now there were only the two of them left. He and it.

And he was going upstairs. He was walking upstairs, still carrying the bloody wrench, and he was going over to the phone to call the police and explain.

HE sat down in a chair before the phone, thinking about what he'd tell them, how he'd explain. It wouldn't be easy. There was this madwoman, see, and she looked into mirrors until there was

more of her alive in her reflection than there was in her own body. So when she committed suicide she lived on, somehow, and came alive in mirrors or glass or anything that reflected. And she killed others or drove them to death and their reflections were somehow joined with hers so that this thing kept getting stronger and stronger, sucking away at life with that awful core of pride that could live beyond death. Woman, thy name is vanity! And that, gentlemen, is why I killed my wife . . .

Yes, it was a fine explanation, but it wouldn't hold water. Water—the pool in the basement had evoked it. He might have known it if only he'd stopped to think, to reflect. Reflect. That was the wrong word, now. Reflect. The way the window pane before him was reflecting.

He stared into the glass now, saw it behind him, surging up from the shadows. He saw the bearded man's face, the peering, pathetic, empty eyes of a little girl, the goggling grimacing stare of an old woman. It wasn't there, behind him, but it was alive in the reflection, and as he rose he gripped the wrench tightly. It wasn't there, but he'd strike at it, fight at it, come to grips with it somehow.

He turned, moving back, the ring of shadow-faces pressing. He swung the wrench. Then he saw her face coming up through all the rest. Her face, with shining splinters where

the eyes should be. He couldn't smash it down, he couldn't hit her again.

It moved forward. He moved back. His arm went out to one side. He heard the tinkle of window-glass behind him and vaguely remembered that this was how the old woman had died. The way he was dying now—falling through the window, and cutting his throat, and the pain lanced up and in, tearing at his brain as he hung there on the jagged spikes of glass, bleeding his life away.

Then he was gone.

His body hung there, but he was gone.

There was a little puddle on the

floor, moving and growing. The light from outside shone on it, and there was a reflection.

Something emerged fully from the shadows now, emerged and capered demurely in the darkness.

It had the face of an old woman and the face of a child, the face of a bearded man, and *Ais* face, and *her* face, changing and blending.

It capered and postured, and then it squatted, dabbling. Finally, all alone in the empty house, it just sat there and waited. There was nothing to do now but wait for the next to come. And meanwhile, it could always admire itself in that growing, growing red reflection on the floor . . .

THE END

The Taloned Submarine

AIRMEN, jetmen, and rocketeers are inclined to look down on the submarine—and that's no joke. They feel as if the wallowing helpless submarine is easy prey for their striking missiles. What can a sub do against a jet or rocket?

Well the answer now is—a lot. Lots of times we've predicted that submarines would carry guided missiles of their own. This has at last been done. A number of United States Navy pigboats have been equipped with containers mounted on the deck and carrying within their bellies grim weapons such as modifications of the famous "buzz-bomb".

While the primary purpose of such weapons is for attack against shipping — preferably helpless shipping

at that—the subs can also carry anti-aircraft rocket projectors and regular anti-aircraft guided missiles.

This means that the airmen of the future must think twice before they launch their attacks on the "helpless" wallowing submarine beneath them. The sub might come back with a mighty stinger. So far it's still experimental but it is believed that a properly equipped sub could fight off a surprisingly strong group of attackers.

The future offers considerable changes. A submarine has effectively become a fanged snake which can strike back successfully against the clawed eagles overhead.

The pigboat men needn't be sitting ducks any longer.

NOT IN THE RULES

By Mack Reynolds

A planet's strength was determined in the Arena where brute force emerged victorious. But the Earthman chose a forgotten weapon—strategy!



I got the bad news as soon as we landed on Mars. The minute I got off the spacer, the little yellow Martians was standing there with a yellow envelope. He said, "Gladiator Jak Demsi?"

I admitted it and he handed me the envelope. Made me feel kind of good, as though I was somebody important, which I'm not. I'd been taking plenty of guff on the trip.

The Earthman drew deliberate attention to himself by rushing into the thick of the
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Not only from Suzi, but from Alger Wilde, who was also along. Yeah, between them they'd ridden me as well as the liner, all the way from Terra.

I handed the Martie a kopek and put the yellow envelope in my pocket, as though I was used to getting spacegrams.

I said to Suzi, "Let's hit the chow

line." I don't usually talk that fancy, but I was trying to impress her with my knowledge of antique phrases. Both Suzi and Alger Wilde are students of ancient times and love to lard their conversation with such stuff.

Suzi said, "Sure, Jak. Come on Alger," which wasn't what I'd meant at all. And then she said, "Aren't



battle, his blade clashing viciously. And a roar went up from the crowd . . .

you going to open that spacegram, Jak? It might be important."

"Probably is," I said carelessly. "But it can wait, whatever it is."

And it did. I opened it after we'd ordered at the spaceport restaurant. I should have waited until after I'd eaten, but I couldn't know that until I read:

SPACER TRANSPORTING
GLADIATOR EARTH-MARS
FOR INTER - PLANETARY
GAMES LOST. YOU HAVE
BEEN APPOINTED EMER-
GENCY REPLACEMENT
REPRESENTING EARTH.
GOOD LUCK.

I gulped. If you don't know all about the Interplanetary Meet which is held every decade, then maybe you don't know why I gulped. If you do, you do. It's tough enough being a gladiator on Terra but at least you have a chance of coming out alive; you've even got a chance of winning. But at the Interplanetary Meet! Who ever heard of a Terran coming out in one piece? Not to speak of winning.

Sure, I'm a gladiator, but I've always been strictly a second rater; in fact, some of the sports writers call me a third rater. Anyway, I've always worked in the smaller meets where the gladiators, even when they lose, usually get off with their lives. In the small town stuff, they don't kill expensive gladiators, if they can help it.

My head was doing double flips trying to figure out some way of

making myself scarce, when Suzi said, "What is it, Jak?"

Like a fool, I banded the message to her and she and Alger read it together.

Suzi's eyes widened and she started to say something, worriedly, but Alger stuck out his hand and said, "Congratulations, Jak. I knew you had great things in you. Now they'll be coming out . . . Er . . . That is, just think, one of the three gladiators representing Terra. What an honor!"

I was sunk.

The Interplanetary Meet was just three days off and I had three days to live.

I wouldn't have been on Mars in the first place if it hadn't been for an argument I had with Suzi back on Terra just before she was scheduled to blast off for Mars to cover the Interplanetary Games. Suzi is a sports reporter, see. She covers the meets from the woman's angle. What she really wanted to do was write books about primitive culture; and what I wanted her to do was spend the rest of her life being my wife. Neither of us seemed to have much of a chance of making good.

As usual, Suzi was giving me *hell*. If you'll pardon my language. "I don't know why I bother with you, Jak," she said scowling. "You've had the book a week and don't know a thing about it. You're nothing but a drip, a square."

"Listen," I said resentfully. "Don't use those mythological terms on me. Last time it took me all day to look them up. Besides, I try don't I? My manager's going crazy because I've been spending so much time reading instead of training for my next meet."

You get the idea. The girl was just gone on the ancients. She wouldn't have tolerated me for an hour if I hadn't been willing to let her cram her nonsense into me at every opportunity.

"How long do you expect to be on Mars?" I asked her.

She shrugged. "Perhaps three months, Terra time."

"Three months!"

She patted my hand. "Don't worry about me, Jak. I'm taking along an extensive micro-film library dealing with the literature and drama of Twentieth Century North America. As you undoubtedly know, it reached its height in the comic books and cartoon movies of the time. Besides," she went on, "Alger Wilde will be there, covering the meet from the society angle. He'll be good company. Alger is quite an authority on prehistoric literature."

"And also on today's women," I yelped. "You didn't tell me that makrow was going to be on Mars with you."

She held her hands over her ears and said indignantly, "Please, Jak, save your vulgarities for the games."

"I'm going with you," I grated.

"I don't trust that guy with my woman."

She flared up at that. "Your woman! Let me tell you, Jak Demsi, when you begin to display the cultural achievements of Alger Wilde, you may begin, just begin, mind you, to think of me as your woman, as you so crudely put it. Meanwhile, I have no desire to link myself with an ignoramus. Besides, I'm beginning to believe that you have no interest in cultural pursuits. You've merely deceived me these past months with pretended . . ."

"Aw, Susi," I began.

I had trouble enough raising credits for my fare, but more still getting last minute reservations on the crowded excursion liner to Mars. It took some string pulling on my manager's part to get me the tickets. Nobody who can raise the credits would dream of missing the Interplanetary Meet, and every spacer to Mars was packed.

Susi was surprised when I stepped up to her table in the spacer's lounge. At least, her eyebrows raised. The little minx was as pretty as a Venusian rose-orchid. She was sitting with Alger Wilde, a *makrow* from the word *gloom*.

"Hi," I said, using a prehistoric formal salutation in hopes of pleasing her with my knowledge of olden times.

"By Jove," Alger Wilde exclaimed. "if it isn't Jak Demsi." He add-

ed, smirking, "Pardon the expression. Jove was an ancient deity. I sometimes slip and use such terms."

Did he think I was stupid? Hadn't I been reading up on all that stuff for months? I sat down casually in an empty acceleration chair.

"Of course," I said. "An Egyptian God; also known as Jupiter by their neighbors, the Aztecs, and by the name of Zeus, by the Chinese."

And that's the way it was all the way to Mars. I tried to hang on and stick it out with them, but I came in a bad third. I was fighting out of my class. In fact, just before we arrived on Mars, Suzi made it plain that she thought I might as well give up my attempts to become cultured. She said I just didn't assimilate the stuff, that it didn't come off on me. I could read whole libraries of the ancient classics and recall none of the significance of what I'd read. In short, I wasn't doing so good with Suzi.

* * *

Well, three days after getting the telegram, I met the other two gladiators from Terra in our dressing room at the arena. They weren't much happier about the meet than I was. *

It's one of the occupational hazards of our trade. If you get too good, you'll probably be chosen as Terra representative to the Interplanetary Meet and your chances

of surviving are almost nil. Of course, the pay is high and your survivors get a big chunk of credits but it's a chilly prospect at best.

The other two were pretty well armored and had chosen spears as weapons, but I left off all armor and took a short sword. I planned on moving fast and the less weight I carried the better.

When the various preliminaries were over and the crowd shouting for the main event, we trotted out to the field, joined the gladiators from the other planets and paraded toward the stand at which the judges and diplomats were seated. There was a mob of these, each with his assistants and secretaries. You could bet that little that happened would miss them. After all, on this meet hung the destinies of planets.

Thousands of spectators from every planet and every principal satellite in the system stared down from their arena seats. I knew that the majority of them had expended a fortune in transport from their homes and for tickets to the meet. But why not! It was the equivalent of having a box seat at a full scale war of the type held in legendary times. Certainly, the ultimate effect was as great or greater. Each spectator knew that upon the manner in which their planet's representatives fought this day, their fates depended.

THE planets have long since abolished war, but they put great

store by these Interplanetary Meets. The theory is: Why fight a war and kill off billions of population when you can figure out before the fighting ever takes place who'd win? It's the natural ultimate development of diplomacy. Everything is settled by the diplomats without resorting to armed conflict.

Suppose, for instance, that Mars decided to assume domination of Terra. She notes, as do the Terran diplomats, that, at the Interplanetary Meet, the Martian gladiators wiped up on those from Terra. Obviously, if the same fighting would take place on a gigantic scale the same thing would result. So why fight the war? Terra simply accepts the domination. Of course, it's all done in very diplomatic language so that nobody loses face, but the results are the same.

As a matter of fact, I'm surprised that one of the other planets hasn't already taken over Terra. The most recent addition to the League of Solar System Planets, we're by far the weakest. Probably our strongest defense has been the fact that several different League members have had their eyes upon us and each has counteracted the other. It's certain that Venus, Saturn, and even Pluto would like to assimilate Terra. Actually, any one of them could do it.

As is customary, a beauty from the planet upon which the meet is being held, a Martian Princess in this case, opened the main event by

throwing out the prize. It was a tremendous Venusian emerald, the largest ever discovered and the size of a man's hand. It doesn't really make much difference who catches the prize, except that it's considered to be a lucky sign; the gladiator who survives the contest is the one who finally takes it.

I could see Suzi in the press box, sitting next to Alger. She seemed pale. I thought I might as well show her that some of the stuff she'd given me to read had been remembered. So just before the Princess tossed out the emerald and while the others stood about nervously and impatient, I drew my sword, flourished it, and called out, "We who are about to die, salute you!"

The Martian Princess smiled down at me. "Good fortune to you, gladiator from Terra," she said, and deliberately threw the stone.

I'd just as well she hadn't. The man with the prize is always the center of conflict and to have a hundred or so of the most efficient killers in the system out after you is no way to live to a ripe old age.

But I caught the emerald and the battle was on. I'd hardly got it into my belt before I heard a swish and a Mercurian *Bouancer*, the steel knives on his heels flashing, missed me by a fraction of an inch. Before it could jump again, a four armed Martian pierced it with a javelin. The Martian went down in his turn under a crushing blow.

from a *Slasher*.

I ran backward quickly, knowing that where there's one *Bouncer* there's another. They fight in a group of twenty or thirty.

SOMETIMES I wonder about that rule. Each planet is represented in the final free-for-all, the climax of the Interplanetary Meet, by weight. The Mercurians, who are about the size of Terran chickens, have thirty gladiators in the battle. The group from Calypso numbers eight, and looks like a gang of human dwarfs. Jupiter and Saturn have only one representative each because of their gigantic size. Mars has four, Terra three. The others have varying numbers.

The other two gladiators from Terra tried to cover me, but went down in the rush. The first fell victim to the heavy, ponderous and nearly weapon proof gladiator from Saturn, victor of the last Interplanetary Meet. The Terran tried to run in close, beneath the other's guard, but was smashed with a sweeping blow that broke half the bones in his body. The crowd cheered for the nice try, and the Saturnian brandished his half ton club again and peered about near-sightedly for another enemy.

My second companion in arms had an arm severed near the shoulder by a fast moving Plutonian *Gadeboot*. He fell to the ground bleeding profusely. At least, he'd probably survive and get back to

Terra.

I had seconds to live. As I said, we Terrans don't show up so well in the games. The gladiators from our planet can take us. Oh, I don't mean that a Terran couldn't defeat one Mercurian *Bouncer*, or one Calypso *Dwoor*, but face our three Terrans with the whole Calypso, or the whole Mercurian delegation and we don't last very long.

I had seconds to live. They were all centering toward me, taking side swipes at one another if the opportunity allowed, but heading for me.

Ordinarily, before a contest, my manager fills me full of last minute advice and instructions; but I'd hardly seen him in the past few months. I'd been too busy reading Suzi's books about the ancients. I was on my own.

I didn't have time to figure it out. It just happened automatically. I remembered something and before I had time to place the memory, I had taken the emerald from my belt, held it up momentarily so they could all see it, and yelled, "For the greatest fighter of all," and threw it into the midst of them.

Later, I recalled a guy in one of Suzi's books having done something similar, except I believe he yelled, "For the fairest," and threw a golden apple. At any rate, the result seemed to be about the same. That guy started the Trojan War.

It gave me a breathing spell. They piled on one another until I thought that the meet would end

them and there. A Venusian spiderman bent to pick up the emerald and had five of his limbs and his head cut off before he could straighten again. A Gadabout grabbed it and tried to dart out of the crush but ran into the darting rapier of a Uranian. Rising dust swirled up and enveloped the rest.

In moments, the fight had settled down into a series of individual combats all over the field.

I could see the slow moving Slumber from Jupiter stalking about weaponless, seizing and crushing all with whom he came in contact. I could see the Mercurian *Bouwers* dying like flies, but killing their share and more of opponents with the razor sharp spurs attached to their feet. They would fling themselves high into the air and come down from above, heels slashing death.

I had no more time to observe. Five remaining Calypso *Dwoors* disengaged themselves from a fight centering about two Venusians, spied me, and dashed in my direction.

ORDINARILY, the Calypso gladiators would be even weaker than we Terrans, but they have the advantage of a universal mind. That is, they think together. Each knows what every other *Dwoor* is thinking; it goes beyond mere mental telepathy. They act as though they were a single individual. Talk about team work! You get three or four

of them about you, all working in complete and perfect harmony, and you're sunk.

I groaned for my manager's advice again and resigned myself. When they got within fifteen feet of me they opened their mouths and cried in unison. "Prepare to die, Terran *makron*."

For a second that did it. I raised my short sword and started toward them. They spread out like a fan to encircle me. Once again I didn't consciously figure it out. The idea came spontaneously with my acting upon it. I just suddenly turned on my heel and started to run. They followed me like a pack.

I'd gotten halfway across the arena and could hear the thousands in the arena seats booing me like thunder, before it came back to me what I'd read. It was a trick some gladiator from Rome or Greece had pulled once. I looked over my shoulder. Sure enough, they were still coming, but now they were strung out in a line. The fastest runner of them all was only a short distance behind me, the slowest, quite a ways back. The other three were in between at varying distances.

This next is going to sound like it took some time but actually it was all over in split seconds.

I stopped, whirled, and said tightly to the one pressing me, "Who's calling who a *makron* now?" At the same time my sword parried his and ripped into his unprotected bel-

ly. He died, his eyes wide with surprise and pain.

I hardly had time to disengage my sword before the second *Dwaorf* was upon me. I dropped to one knee and slashed upward cutting completely through his right arm. The arm fell to the ground, his hand still clutching the three pronged javelin with which he'd expected to spit me. He screamed in agony and stumbled away hopelessly trying to staunch the flow of blood with his left hand.

The third came running up, both hands high over his head, ready to bring down his battle ax. I kicked him savagely with a spiked shoe, cracking a knee and bringing him to the ground. I could have finished him then and there but didn't have the time. The fourth, yelling like a maniac, slashed into me, his blade ripping my right arm from elbow to shoulder. He brought up his sword for another stroke.

I was short winded from the long run across the arena and from the fast action of the past few moments. I drew all my strength together and lunged desperately forward. My sword pierced his throat. He fell, writhing, taking my blade with him.

I stood up wearily to confront the fifth one. My arm was bleeding freely and I had no weapon nor time to get one.

He came shouting, raging with bloodlust and desire for revenge. His arm flew back for the javelin

cast when a Flutonian *Gadeboot* shot out from a nearby mellee and struck him from the rear. The *Dwaorf* collapsed, bleeding his life away in moments. The *Gadeboot* straightened up, shrilling its death whistle, preparatory to darting at me, but a Mercurian *Bouancer*, wounded and fluttering, came down from above and made a last desperate stroke. They died together.

I shook my head to clear it, and I reached down to disengage my sword from the neck of the fallen *Dwaorf* I'd killed last. I looked about. There were no others near me.

For a moment there was a breathing spell. In the past ten minutes, two thirds of the contestants had either died or had been carried off the field incapacitated. Those of us that remained were wounded but still in the fight. As I stood there staggering, panting, aching, it occurred to me that never before had a Terran lasted so long in an Interplanetary Meet.

As though by common consent, we all gravitated toward the center of the arena. This was it. In the next few moments the contest would be over.

And so would I.

As I stumbled forward, a wounded Martian staggered to his feet and made a half-hearted stab at me. I bypassed him. He was too far gone to fight. Shortly, the judges' assistants would get to him.

and take him from the field; possibly he'd have a chance to survive. I had no desire to finish him off. In fact, I envied him.

We were quiet momentarily; and so was the crowd. A hush hung over the whole arena. I noted in seconds that among the survivors were two of the four limbed Martians, half a dozen *Bouncers*, the gigantic *Slaber* from Jupiter, one of the Calypso *Dwarfs* almost helpless now that his fellows were all gone, three or four *Gedaboots*, and a Venusian spiderman.

I wondered vaguely if my namesake, that gladiator of the fabulous days of the legendary United States, the original Jak Demsl, had ever found himself in a spot like this. I suppose that he had, possibly worse. Suzi, who gave me the name, saying that it would be good for publicity, claimed he was one of the greatest of all. I shook my head again, trying to clear it, my loss of blood making me faint.

And then it broke. The dust swirled high as we rushed together. I felt a crushing blow, tried to deal one back, was struck again by the ponderous gladiator from Jupiter and was thrown heavily to the ground.

I tried to push myself to my knees, my already bloody sword still in hand, still at the ready. I was in the center of the crush. This was the end. Suzi flashed before my mind.

Well, there was a tremendous

controversy afterward and I was brought before the judges and the diplomats more like a prisoner than the victor of the Interplanetary Meet. I was laden down with bandages and weak from loss of blood but they didn't look in the least sympathetic, not even the judge and diplomats from Terra.

They got right to the point.

The Martian judge, as senior, since the meet was taking place on his planet, acted as spokesman. He was excited and indignant and would wave three or four of his arms at a time to emphasize his point. I thought vaguely of one of the olden time windmills I'd seen pictured in one of Suzi's books.

"Gladiator Jak Demsl," he rasped, "Our tendency is to rule your conduct in the affair so unbecoming that not only will the prize not be awarded you, as last standing contestant on the field, but we are considering . . ."

I wasn't having any. After combing through that scrap, I wasn't ever figuring on taking a back seat again. I interrupted him, growling. "I'm willing to stand behind anything I did in the arena on the grounds that it was compatible with Terran custom and therefore allowable on the part of a Terran gladiator."

The Venusian judge sneered, without bothering to say anything; the Plutonian uttered his disbelief; the Terran judge blinked at me, shocked by my words.

I was getting mad. "In the press box, you'll find two reporters from Terra. Bring them here. They are both students of Terran history and ancient custom and will support what I say."

Suzi and Alger Wilde were located and brought before us after a brief debate between the judges. By their appearance, it was obvious that the press box boys had similar ideas to those of the judges. Suzi showed signs of concern about my wounds but she also half indicated that I was a leper. There was no *half* about it as far as Alger Wilde was concerned.

"You might have died like a man, Demsi," he said sharply. "instead of bringing disgrace to Terra."

The Martian judge said coldly, "This gladiator claims that his astounding actions in the arena were excusable on the grounds that everything he did is in accord with Terran customs and, consequently, permissible by the rules of the Interplanetary Meet."

Suzi's eyes widened. Alger Wilde began to protest.

I didn't give them a chance to deny anything. "Just what are the complaints?" I asked the judge.

"As though they weren't obvious," he snorted, beginning to wave his arms again. "First, your trick of throwing the emerald, the Princess was so kind to honor you with, into the midst of the others and thus diverting the strife from yourself. This was an act of——"

"Strategy," I interrupted him. "The custom is to be found in Terran history. An old maxim of the Sioux Indians was 'Divide and Conquer.' That's what I did. I got my opponents to fighting among themselves so that I could defeat them easier."

"The Romans, not the Sioux Indians," Alger muttered.

"Then you mean that this was actually a maxim of Terra?" the judge said in surprise. I could see the other judges and diplomats, including those from earth, were as shocked as the Martian.

"Well, yes," Suzi told him. "Of course, they usually didn't use quite the method that Jak did. . . ."

The judge snorted again. "Be that as it may, I don't see how Demsi can justify his fleeing before the Calypso gladiators like a common coward. Meet rules are that each gladiator must fight any who oppose him."

Suzi shot a worried look at me.

"Right in accord with Terran history and custom," I said decisively. "For one thing, it was always a basic rule with a Terran general to choose the battlefield where the fight was to be joined. It was considered a major advantage. Another maxim was, 'Git there fustest, with the mostest.' I merely ran to the ground that best suited me, and then, when the Calypso *Dwarfs* were no longer the mostest, I fought them one at a time."

The judge raised his eyes ques-

tioningly at Alger and was rewarded with a grudging nod.

THE Martian shook his head as though in disbelief but went on. "Those two matters you have explained, surprisingly, but acceptably. But to this last charge there can be no possible honorable background in Terran custom. I refer to the fact that in the final conflict *you fell as though dead and remained on the ground until the other contestants had all but eliminated each other*. When only the badly wounded Slaber and the half dead Venusian gladiator remained, you got up again and, reentering the fight, finished off these opponents."

The judge threw up his four hand in horror. "Certainly, you can't claim justification for that! Not on any grounds, not by and . . ."

I stood up as straight and defiantly as my heavy bandages would allow. "Listen," I growled. "It's one of the oldest traditions of Terra. It's called PLAYING POSSUM!"

For a full minute silence fell on the whole group. Then I could hear one diplomat whisper questioningly to another. "Playing possum? What does that mean?"

And then with one of the most outstanding bits of pure statesmanship the system has even seen, Suzi took up the cue and spoke in collaboration.

"He's quite right. Playing pos-

sum is in full accord with Terran custom. Why," she added innocently, "earth always acts in that manner. She pretends she's weak, helpless, someone to be ignored; and, then, suddenly, and without warning, she shows her full strength."

The various judges and diplomats shot glances at each other from the sides of their eyes, especially those from Venus, Saturn, and Pluto.

The Terran judge was no *makron*. When somebody yelled *glory* he knew enough to grab the *gaboot* and run with it. He looked at Suzi and I severely. "Say no more, either of you. You are not here to reveal Terran secrets."

The other diplomats eyed each other again, nervously.

The Martian judge, more genial now, said, "Undoubtedly, a mistake has been made due to our lack of knowledge of Terran customs and practices. The emerald shall be awarded the Terran gladiator, Jak Demsi, as soon as it is found. It is undoubtedly still in the arena in the possession of some slain contestant."

I took it from my belt. "As a matter of fact, I have it here. I picked it up while playing possum under that heap of corpses. It's an old custom handed down from a Terran city named Brooklyn. 'When you see something that ain't nailed down, latch onto it!'"

Alger Wilde left the room hur-

riedly, followed hand in hand by Suzi and I. It was time for the diplomats to begin their wrangling, the wrangling that would settle the fate of worlds. As we passed through the door, I could see the

anticipation on the faces of the diplomats from Terra.

From what I heard later, they must have given the other diplomats *kerf*. If you'll pardon my language.

THE END

Secret Science

A few months ago, a prominent national magazine requested an interestingly written popular article on atomic energy from an internationally famous American scientist. It got the article and went to work preparing it for publication. After editorial work and makeup the magazine went to press and in a short time thousands of copies had been printed preparatory to going to subscribers and the news stands.

But then the Atomic Energy Commission got hold of a copy of the magazine. Moving like lightning, the A.E.C. clamped a confiscatory order on the printed magazines and stopped the presses. It ordered all copies of the article destroyed. There was nothing to do but comply.

Then the repercussions began. The article was rewritten, the material which offended the A.E.C. removed, and the magazine went to press without further interruption. But the howl against censorship began. The scientist who had written the article painstakingly pointed out to the members of the Commission that nothing he had written the first time could not be found anywhere

else. It was common knowledge, he claimed.

The Atomic Energy Commission answered its attackers with a reasonable reply. They said that if they were sure war was coming soon, they'd clamp absolute secrecy on everything. But they admitted that if they knew war wasn't coming within thirty years, they'd abandon secrecy entirely!

It's hard for us on the sidelines to judge whether this type of censorship is right or not, but we've got a feeling that it's unnecessary and harmful to our real efforts. In spite of all, the hedge and guards erected during wartime, it seems that the major combatants, industrially of the same caliber, generally produce weapons and counter-weapons one right after the other.

Meanwhile during peacetime, any secrecy efforts at all seem to hurt the country's own scientists more than anyone. Right now, there are hundreds of atomic energy projects in the U.S., many of which do not know what is going on in their own field at some other institution. A scientist working on atomic energy at

Cal Tech, can't know what his colleagues are doing at the U. of C. unless he goes through "channels." And then by the time he learns something, the work has been duplicated or he's failed to make one of those simple little applications which

often make the difference between failure and success.

We say this; you can't advance scientifically, if your left hand doesn't know what your right hand is doing.

The TV Amateur

THE "ham" radio operator and builder is now a well known fixture of the American scene, particularly since the advent of TV when he became the cause of all the interference with TV receivers of the neighbors. The minute something goes wrong with the TV receiver, Joe Blow says "It's that jerk radioman down the street," not realizing that the chances are a thousand to one that it isn't at all. Hams are watched too closely by the FCC for that.

Radio amateurs are entering the field of television—as would be expected—by another entry. The technical problems associated with this new form of entertainment and the fascinating scientific capabilities of this new medium act as an irresistible lure for the amateur who can't resist a scientific gadget. As a result a number of amateurs have built their own TV stations, transmitter included. When one realizes the complexity of the instrument, one is forced to admire the ingenuity of people who can do something like that.

Regardless of the obstacles, the amateurs have gone ahead compounding their magnificent stations from war-surplus materials, a little money, plenty of skill, and access to

numerous "junkboxes."

The point of all this activity is very sharp and clear. The last war proved the importance of their role. Hams were everywhere with their highly specialized knowledge. In no small measure did they contribute to eventual victory. The U.S. always had on hand a backlog of highly skilled technicians from whom it could draw lavishly—and did.

Any future war, almost certain to use radio, radar, and television communications in enormous quantities, particularly for the skilled art of guided missiles, will find the U.S. filled with large numbers of men to whom TV is as familiar as radio, to whom a guided missile is nothing more than a flying TV set, and to whom a radar beam is no different than the transmitting antenna atop their houses!

This tremendous nucleus of talent is being encouraged to enter the new field of radar and TV even though the technical problems of correlating the activities of so many transmitters seem insurmountable. The reasons are clear.

And one thing must certainly be kept in mind; it is almost a dead certainty that the communications officer aboard the Moon-rocket will be an ex-ham!

AN EEL BY THE TAIL

By

Allen K. Lang

Mr. Tedder felt an embarrassed flush
coloring his cheeks as the figure of
the girl undulated before his eyes . . .



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Mr. Tedder was quite sure that a strip tease dancer had no place in his physics classroom. But what bothered him more was how she got there!

THE strip teaser materialized in the first period physics class at Terre Haute's Technical High School.

It all happened just because Mr.

Tedder was fresh out of college, and anxious to make good in his first teaching job. He'd been given Physics II, a tough class for a new teacher. His pupils, a set of hard-



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ened 11-A boys, were sure of themselves and so were the few girls in the class. It was with hopes of shaking that assurance that Mr. Tedder had spent a month of after-school hours studying an article on Ziegler's effect. He also hoped, but with less faith than wishfulness, that a demonstration of Ziegler's effect might shock his class into staying awake. Above all, Mr. Tedder felt that his Junior boys might be considerably edified by an electrical phenomenon that was not yet understood by the best physical theorists of three planets.

Mr. Tedder wanted to give his class a good show. So, with more feeling for dramatic effect than for scientific good sense, he'd wound the three solenoids with heavy insulated silver wire rather than with the light copper wire Ziegler had reported using. On the theory that, if he were to demonstrate the Ziegler effect it would be best to demonstrate a whole lot of it, Mr. Tedder contrived a battery of the new lithium-reaction cells. The direct current from this powerful battery was transformed by an antique, but workable, automotive spark coil.

The bell rang as usual that morning, marking the beginning of the first class. Twenty pupils filed into the physics classroom and took their seats. Eighteen of them slumped down in an attitude which suggested that, although they were prepared to accept stoically the hour's ordeal, they weren't going to allow themselves to be taught anything.

After all, Tech had lost last night's game to Walash: what physical phenomena could hope to shake off that grim memory? There was a shuffling of papers as the boys in the back seats pulled comic books from their notebooks. Guenther and Stetzel, sitting up front, pulled sheets of paper from notepads and headed them, "The Ziegler Effect."

The classroom settled into an uneasy silence. Mr. Tedder waved an instructive hand toward the apparatus set up on the marble top of the demonstration bench. "As you can see, I have a set of three solenoids, or coils of insulated wire, connected to a source of alternating current. A sudden surge of this current through the outermost solenoid will give an iron-cerium alloy bar placed at the center of the apparatus an impetus toward horizontal motion." Stetzel and Guenther, who were conscientious, took rapid notes. The rest of the class was divided between those students who were surreptitiously catching up on the adventures of "*The Rocket Patrol*" and those who were quietly sinking into sleep.

MR. Tedder continued. "The alloy bar's initial movement will be frustrated, as it were, by the action of a second solenoid placed within and at right angles to the first. A third coil, within and at right angles to each of the outer two, completes the process. The winding ratios of the three solenoids are 476:9:34." Stetzel and Guen-

ther scribbled the numbers rapidly; Ned Norcross, in the back row, stirred in his sleep, and two members of the Class of '95 who shared a volume of the Rocket Patrol's exploits agreed to turn the page.

"What happens to the bar of iron-cerium at this point is a matter of conjecture. All observers are agreed only in that it disappears. Perhaps it leaves the coils so rapidly that it neither injures the wires nor can it be seen. Perhaps the bar passes through a temporary fissure in the three-dimensional system we perceive, falling into some yet-unconceivable other dimension. Doctor Ziegler, who first observed this effect, inclines to this latter belief." Mr. Tedder placed his fingers on the telegraph key he'd rigged up to close the circuit through his apparatus. "Watch closely," he cau-

* * *

On the twenty-third planet at a distant sun—a planet called by its inhabitants a name for which there are no equivalents in human phonetics—a Young Being in the early stages of pre-maturity tangled the minds of his elders with feelings of anguish. His teacher had disappeared!

* * *

Ned Norcross, who was taking Junior Physics II for the third time, had his mind on neither the Ziegler Effect nor the tragic results of last night's basketball game. He

was slumped at his desk, dreamily rehearsing the topography of one Honey LaRue, a strip teaser who nightly practiced her art at the Club Innuendo. Norcross propped himself up on one elbow to glance toward the clock above the demonstration bench, then slumped forward on his desk in a faint. Up on the marble top of the demonstration bench, pulling off a right silk glove in time to the lazy ripple of a snare-drum, danced Honey LaRue.

Mr. Tedder yelped, and immediately regretted it. He'd had two beers three days before; could that bring on hallucination at this late date? But Honey had gone, taking the Ziegler coils with her. One terminal of the telegraph key was still connected to the plate on the spark coil, the other wire ended in a little knot of fused silver. No, this wasn't the effect that Doctor Ziegler had reported, not at all!

TO cover his confusion Mr. Tedder began to talk. "There, you've just seen the Ziegler effect in action. Explain what you've just seen and you'll be famous among men." Indeed, the cerium-iron alloy bar had disappeared; but so had 20,000 cm. of No. 40 silver wire, silk-insulated. But the boys—except, of course, Stetzel and Guenther—hadn't noticed. Mr. Tedder glanced over his shoulder to the clock, saw that it would be fifteen minutes before the class would end,

and made a quick decision in the interest of his sanity. "Class dismissed!" he said.

There was a stupefied second while the news soaked into dormant nervous systems. Then the boys were shouting across the room, grabbing up books, and hurrying out into the hall to take noisy advantage of their moment of freedom. Stetzel and Guenther, as be-hooved the top pupils of the Class of '95, hurried up to Mr. Tedder to check their notes.

"The symbol for cerium is 'Ce,' isn't it?" Stetzel asked.

"Yes. But now . . ."

"How did you do that, Mr. Tedder?" Guenther interrupted.

"Do what?" Mr. Tedder glanced suspiciously at Guenther. Perhaps it hadn't been those two beers.

"You had a woman dancing, right up where those solenoids were," Guenther said.

"That's what I saw," Stetzel substantiated. "What a movie! She sure looked three-dimensional to me. Wow!"

"Yes," Mr. Tedder said, canceling his decision of a moment before, to lay off beer. "That was just a little stunt I thought up to see how many of you were paying attention. New optical principle, you know. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got to get things ready for the next class. And wake up Norcross on your way out, will you?"

Stetzel jarred Norcross from unconsciousness and walked out into

the hall, talking and gesturing significantly with Guenther. Norcross unfolded himself slowly, glanced with a furtive eye toward Mr. Tedder and the empty bench-top, and walked rapidly out of the room, down the stairs, and into the school physician's office.

Alone, Mr. Tedder frowned at the bereft lithium battery and telegraph key. He had pressed the key, closing the circuit, and there'd been a spurt of flame. A strange girl had appeared, dancing on the marble top of the demonstration bench. He'd never seen the woman before; a tall blonde wearing very little . . . What the devil! There she was again.

Mr. Coar, principal of Tech, walked toward the door to the physics classroom, rehearsing the speech he was going to deliver upon Tedder. "Young man, Tech does not approve of the practice of letting students out into the halls before the end of the period. Their racket has shaken the walls of classrooms on three floors. What have you to say for yourself, Mr. Tedder?" Yes, that would do nicely. Mr. Coar opened the door.

MR. Tedder was leaning against a front-row desk, nodding appreciatively as a sketchily-clad young lady danced for him. "TEDDER!" the principal bellowed. "Stop that!"

Honey LaRue faded, and the space between telegraph key and lithium battery was empty again.

"Stop what?" Mr. Tedder inquired, wide-eyed with innocence.

"Stop letting your classes out early so that you can spend your time gloating over your . . . your . . ." Mr. Coar groped for a singing adjective, drew a blank, and concluded weakly, ". . . your movies!"

"Did you see her, too?"

"I did, indeed. You came here highly recommended by Indiana University, Tedder; and, frankly, I didn't expect this sort of thing from you."

"Mr. Coar, I believe that I've stumbled across a novel physical phenomenon."

"Anatomy was being studied in 1600 A.D., young man," Mr. Coar observed, his voice dripping sarcasm, "and is scarcely any longer a 'novel physical phenomenon'."

"Sit down, sir." Mr. Tedder offered the principal the top of a desk in the front row. "Now, what did you expect to see when you came in here?"

"The apparatus of a physics laboratory—all those gears and coils and tubes and . . . things," Mr. Coar vaguely enumerated. "Certainly not a . . ." The principal sat heavily on the desk top, bulge-eyed. On the marble top of the demonstration bench was a Goldberg-esque network of machinery, a perfect reproduction of the principal's uncertain notions concerning scientific gadgetry.

"How the devil did you do that,

Tedder?"

"People have been asking me all morning. I don't know. I don't think that I did do it."

"Has that girl . . ." Honey LaRue reappeared on the bench, and the air vibrated with the drums' seductive roll ". . . been here before?"

"Yes, sir. Couple of boys in my class saw her, too."

"Where are they now?"

Mr. Tedder glanced up at the clock. "It's second period by now. Stetzel is in Latin III, I believe; and Guenther's in Microbiology II."

Mr. Coar went over to the loud-speaker in the corner of the room, pressed a button, and spoke to his secretary, up in the school office. "Ann, send me students Guenther and Stetzel. Rooms 103 and 309." He switched the blat-box off. He turned toward the empty demonstration bench, wrinkled his forehead in concentration, and looked up. A pot of geraniums was standing on the marble bench-top.

"Whew! It knows what I'm thinking about!"

"Looks that way, doesn't it?"

"But nothing can do that. Not electricity, nor electronics, nor even cybernetics."

"Nothing that we know about could, sir. What would you suggest that I do with the screwy thing?"

MMr. Coar, caught off guard, made a suggestion which was

more witty than helpful. The classroom door swung open, and Stetzel and Guenther buried in together, vocally wondering at their release from schedule. "Good morning, Mr. Coar; Mr. Tedder. Did you want us?" Stetzel asked.

"Did you see a woman in here?" the principal demanded.

"Yes, sir," Guenther said, "The movie, you mean."

"So you saw her, too. That rules mass hypnosis out," Mr. Coar illogically decided, glancing suspiciously toward the young physics instructor.

The classroom door swung open again, admitting two teachers. Mr. Percy N. Formeller, known to two generations of biology students as Old Preserved - In - Formaldehyde, was full of indignation at the pre-emption of Guenther from his microbiology class. Miss MacIntire, Latin I-V, followed, equally indignant over Stetzel's defection from Marcus Porcius Cato.

"Mr. Coar," Mr. Formeller demanded, "what is the meaning of this? Guenther left in the middle of a movie on *Trypanosoma gambiense*, disturbing my entire class. In Technicolor, too," the biology instructor finished, accusingly.

"And how about calling Stetzel out of my class during the Third Punic War?" Miss MacIntire said.

Mr. Coar defended himself. "We have something here which is unique, possibly of great value to science." Miss MacIntire sniffed. Science was something that students elected to

take instead of Latin. "I'm happy that you two teachers came in. You may be able to help us throw some light on our problem. You took the precaution of placing your classes in the hands of responsible monitors, I hope?"

"Of course!" Miss MacIntire snapped.

"What is the nature of this 'unique something' that our Mr. Coar mentioned, Mr. Tedder?" Old Preserved - In - Formaldehyde spoke as one who seeks to calm troubled waters.

"I frankly believe it to be an unearthly life-form," Mr. Tedder said. "Telepathic and hallucinative, by my guess, and definitely not from this earth."

Mr. Formeller, who kept his three-year subscription to *Improbable Stories* a closely-guarded secret, glanced about him for the extra-terrestrial life-form. He shouted. There on the demonstration bench was a green-skinned monster, an eight-foot tall caricature of a *Tyrannosaurus Rex*, holding a nubile and light-clad young lady under its right foreleg. There was a "thump" beside the biology teacher as Miss MacIntire fainted to the floor. Stooping gallantly to pull his colleague back to her feet, Mr. Formeller stopped thinking of the telepathic, hallucinative, and green *Tyrannosaurus Rex*, which, grinning, disappeared.

MR. COAR stared toward the empty demonstration bench,

wrinkled his forehead in concentration, and was again rewarded by the pot-of-geraniums - made-manifest. "See?" he asked rhetorically. "It becomes anything you want it to."

"Curious." Mr. Formeller glared toward the table. A small, orange insect appeared. The biology teacher bent over it and counted the spots on the orange anterior wings. "Six spots. A real *bipunctata*, of a common local variety, or I don't know my *Coleoptera*." An idea struck him, and he backed rapidly away from the bench. He turned to Mr. Tedder. "I wouldn't go too close to the thing, if I were you. It creates these things for a purpose. I believe that this hallucinative power, as you call it, is the logical development of protective coloration, mimicry, and similar devices used by earthly creatures to elude their enemies and to lure their prey."

"You mean, this beast on the table top mimics what we're thinking about in hopes of drawing us close enough to seize us and eat us?" asked Miss MacIntire.

"Roughly, yes." Mr. Formeller nodded. "We've no way of knowing the metabolic processes, the thought patterns, or even the true form of the creature. Its action in creating a pleasant picture may be as automatic as the *Startkrause* reflex, or playing 'possum, is to foxes and opossums and *Leptinotarsa decemlineatae*." Mr. Formeller paused, hoping that his erudition was

showing.

Miss MacIntire, who had seated herself back at a third-row desk, remarked, "I do wish that the beast were a rational creature."

There was a flurry in the air above the demonstration bench as a togued Greek gentleman came into being. He raised a portentous index finger, exclaimed an involved Greek observation and disappeared.

"It can talk!" Mr. Coar marveled.

"It said, 'You've got an eel by the tail!'" Miss MacIntire translated. "Greek."

"Like having a bull by the horns, or an armful of greased pig," Stetzel commented.

"If you'll excuse me," Goenther said, "it seems to me that the thing has some will of its own. For one thing, whatever form it takes, that form is not ambiguous or wavering, as an image in the mind's eye must be."

"What's more," Stetzel continued his friend's argument, "it can say things that are presumably not in the mind which called it into being. For example, using Greek to explain itself—I hope that I'm being clear—shows that the creature has imaginative power, as well as the ability to read our minds."

Percy N. Formeller hadn't been listening. Psychological investigations could wait until there was a good, solid foundation of physical fact on which to build. "I wonder if it's carnivorous?" he murmured.

MR. Tedder nodded. He approved of Mr. Formeller's method. Strictly scientific. "I have some meat in my lunch," Mr. Tedder said. He walked carefully around the demonstration bench, staying a good five meters away from the potential carnivore. If the creature were a meat-eater, Mr. Tedder had no desire to have its feeding-habits demonstrated upon the person of a young physics instructor. Back in the stockroom Mr. Tedder opened his brown paper lunch bag, unfolded the wax paper from the top sandwich, and shook out a slice of pimento-loaf. He wished that he'd brought a less plebian lunch. Pork chops, perhaps. Oh, well. Mr. Tedder walked out into the classroom holding the slice of meat by one ketchup-moist corner.

Mr. Formeller impaled the slice of pimento-loaf on a length of No. 8 galvanized wire the physics teacher provided. Like a keeper shoving a flank of horse meat into a cageful of lions, the biology teacher thrust the baited wire into the empty air above the demonstration bench.

The pimento-loaf slice disappeared.

"Carnivorous," Mr. Formeller noted with satisfaction.

"Do you suppose that the creature could get off the table and . . . walk around?" Miss MacIntire hoped that her maidenly caution wouldn't be thought an old maid's foible.

"If it were readily mobile, it wouldn't have developed so com-

plex a mechanism to lure its prey," Mr. Formeller said. "Its various . . . what's the classical word, Miss MacIntire?"

"Protean."

"Yes. Its protean manifestations are a clue to its habits. It is rooted to the spot, like a plant."

"Like Venus' flytrap?" Guenther suggested.

"Yes," the biology teacher approved. "*Dionaea muscipula* is a cogent example of the sort of plant I'm talking about. By the way, don't you think we ought to name this thing? We've been calling it 'creature' and 'monster' and all sorts of things. Most unscientific."

"We might call it *Rete proteanum*," Miss MacIntire suggested from her third-row seat. "A 'many-formed trap', you know."

"No, we want a name which suggests its origin as well as its habits."

"It's not of this world, nor of the known solar system," Mr. Tedder commented.

"That's it. It's an extra-solar; no, an extra-galactic being-of-many-forms."

"*Polymorph metaglecticus*," Miss MacIntire said. "Not an inspired name, but it will do, it will suffice."

Mr. Coar stared at the empty space between the telegraph key and the bank of lithium-reaction cells. His pot of geraniums appeared again, then the scarlet flowers wavered, faded, and became gold-and-purple pansies. "Polymorph it is," the principal said. His air was that

of a bishop conferring imprimatur upon a lay brother's interpretation of a Gospel passage.

THE pot of pansies disappeared, giving way to Honey LaRue. The snare-drums swished and chattered, and Honey, who'd rid herself of a good deal more than her gloves, winked knowingly at Miss MacIntire. Spotting Stetzel, Honey propelled her pelvis several centimeters in a horizontal direction, a movement known to the trade as the "bump." The Latin teacher uttered an unclassical yelp of outraged modesty and averted her head. Stetzel grew pink to his ear-tips. This extra-galactic polymorph had no tact at all! Honey disappeared with a regretful shrug, and the lascivious drum-rolls ceased.

"This sort of thing could become dangerous," Mr. Tedder commented.

"What can we do with it?" Mr. Coar asked. "It wouldn't do to put a cage around it. It can't move any more than a . . . geranium plant can. And what will we feed it?"

"Pimento-loaf," the physics instructor suggested.

"Think of the value this thing can have!" Stetzel enthused. "Psychiatrists can see the morbid mind-images of their disturbed patients, the paranoics and the like, and devise techniques of cure."

"By studying the metabolism of this polymorph, we can deduce the physical conditions of the world it came from," Mr. Formeller observ-

ed, a glint of the hunter-instinct in his eyes.

"We might even ask it questions about the world it came from!" Guenther said. "Maybe it would show its real form to us, and talk or think to us. It's already shown a lot of initiative, you know."

Miss MacIntire, who'd recovered from the shock of Honey LaRue, spoke up. "We've got an eel by the tail, as it said. We can't handle it, and we can't let it go. We'll have to call in experts in zoology and physics . . ." Mr. Formeller exchanged outraged glances with Mr. Tedder ". . . and have them study the polymorph with the best instruments available."

"All this is very well," Mr. Formeller said, "but what I'd like to know is how this Polymorph got into your classroom, Tedder."

Mr. Tedder cautiously stepped up to the demonstration bench and took the knob of the telegraph key in his fingers. "This was the switch in a Ziegler's effect apparatus I'd set up for demonstration. I just tapped it, like this . . ." Mr. Tedder slapped the key down.

There was a glare of sudden greenness, and the air popped like a broken vacuum tube as it rushed in to occupy space suddenly vacated.

The Extra-Galactic Polymorph was gone. Mr. Coar wrinkled his brow and thought furiously of geranium-plants-in-pots, to no avail. Miss MacIntire thought wistfully of the handsome Greek gentleman

who'd addressed her with an obscure quotation. Mr. Tedder, Stetzel, and Guenther bent their combined brains to steady consideration of Miss Honey LaRue, and for a moment they thought they heard the lustful bellow of a super-nal saxaphone. But Honey stayed away.

"If we'd only taken photographs!" Mr. Formeller wailed. "Maybe the things we saw, we saw only in our minds. The polymorph's real form would have registered on film."

"Maybe if Mr. Tedder would duplicate that apparatus of his, and . . ." Miss MacIntire paused uncertainly. The arcans of physics were as unknown to her as was the Greek ablative to Mr. Tedder. "Well, do the same thing that you did before. Maybe he'll come back."

"No." Mr. Tedder was glum. "It won't be back. When you think that all objects are constantly

changing in space and time, you see how wonderful it is that anything ever gets anywhere. The Extra-Galactic Polymorph won't be back. Its appearance was an accident; a huge, incredible, once-in-all-history coincidence."

* * *

On the twenty-third planet of a sun of a galaxy that lay beyond the ken of even the two-hundred-inch mirror of Palomar and the giant refractors of Luna; a planet the name of which cannot be expressed in human phonetics, a Young Being in the early stages of pre-maturity choriled with its Id. Its teacher was back! Swiftly, the youngster threw aside the messy slice of pimento-lob that was dropped across the silver cube and commanded, "Zarf me a Klomppf!" A Klomppf appeared, and the Young Being spilled its delight out into the winds of its elders.

THE END

Featured Next Issue:---

HELL'S ANGEL

By ROBERT BLOCH

Maybe you've wondered what Heaven is like? Paul Hastings found out when he stole an Angel right in the shadow of the Pearly Gates. Why? It seemed that His Satanic Majesty had a use for her—a most diabolical use — one that Hastings, a mere mortal, seemed helpless to thwart. Yet he had to or the world was doomed!

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Conducted by Mari Wolff

BILL Hamling has asked me, as a fan, to write this department reviewing fandom and its activities. But first of all I want to answer a question that people are always asking me, "Just what is a fan?"

If you're one of the new readers of *Imagination* and of the science fiction-fantasy field in general, you're probably wondering that too. I remember how curious I was about fandom when I first began reading about it. I finally decided that I just had to meet some fans and find out what they were like.

What are fans? In the first place, they're people who love science fiction and fantasy so much that they're not content with just reading it. It's a major part of their lives. If they live within a reasonable distance of each other—say up to a hundred miles apart—they get together whenever possible. In the big cities this is relatively easy. The Los Angeles Science-Fantasy Society, for example,

holds weekly meetings which are usually attended by thirty or forty fans from the Los Angeles area. But in the smaller towns it's harder to get a group of fans together. Some fans live so far from their nearest fan neighbors that they can't possibly visit each other often. But that doesn't stop them from writing to each other. Fan letters also appear regularly in the letter columns of the various magazines, and they're seriously written, believe me.

Most fans get into print eventually, in one or another of the amateur publications, called fanzines. If you've never seen a fanzine, you've really missed something. There are quite a few of these magazines, and they vary greatly, but they all have one thing in common. They're put out, not for profit, but because their editors are interested enough in fandom to give up the hours and hours it takes to assemble and mimeograph and distribute them. Their subscription price

covers no more than the cost of the materials, and usually not even that. The stories and articles and illustrations are all donated, also, and the only reward that a fan author or artist gets is the pride of seeing his work in print.

It's a lot of work putting out a fanzine, and usually it has to be done in whatever spare time the editors have. But it's a lot of fun, too. Everyone sits around cutting stencils and drinking coffee and wondering what to use to fill in that half page at the end of the book review column. There's an old mimeograph set up in one corner alongside the shelves of science fiction magazines that the group has collected across the years. Maybe there's an original cover painting from one of the magazines hanging on the wall. It gives you a very fanish feeling, just to be there working, and when the issue is finally put together and run off on the mimeo and put into the mail, you really feel you have accomplished something.

AMONG them, the fanzines cover just about everything connected with fantasy and science fiction. Some of them are very serious, dealing mainly with new trends in the sciences. Others are mainly fiction magazines. I've shown fan magazines to non-fan readers and had them express amazement over the quality of some of these amateur stories. Lots of them are different and quite off-trail.

There is something refreshing in a fan's attitude toward life that is reflected in the stories and articles he writes. Almost all fans are individualists who feel a humorous disrespect for authority in any form. Rick Smeary, one of the most prominent of all fans, expressed this atti-

tude very well when he said, "The trouble with fans is that all of us are leaders and none of us are followers, and so we're always running in all directions at the same time."

If you read fanzines you'll see what Rick means. Nothing is sacred, not even fandom itself. You're quite likely to find an article parodying the latest concepts of sociology right next to a story where the villains are human beings and the heroes are kind-hearted vampires who after all can make much better use of that blood than its original owners could. It's all just a matter of viewpoint. In fandom you'll find viewpoints by the dozen—all different and all stimulating.

Perhaps you'll disagree violently with some of the articles, but that's stimulating too. Fans spend a lot of time and paper disagreeing with each other. Sometimes I think that the real reason fans become interested in science fiction in the first place is that it's a field where there are so many opportunities for a good argument. Nothing is set. If you don't like one future, you can always pick another. Fandom isn't for those who see nothing except a nice, safe grindstone in front of their noses. Fans choose their own horizons. If I want to state that the inhabitants of Galaxy K can behave only thus and so, because of certain properties peculiar to that portion of the universe, I'll say it. On paper. And I'll know that at least half of my fan friends will be ready and eager to tell me enthusiastically that I'm crazy. That's what makes being a fan so much fun.

One of the best things about fandom is the number of friends you make. Some of them you'll write to. Probably there are some you'll never meet, but you'll be friends just the same. It's amazing how well you can

get to know a person just by exchanging letters with him. Then sometime when you're travelling through his part of the country you can stop off and pay him a visit. There's always a feeling of suspense about such a meeting. You can't help wondering if the person you're going to see will be the same friend you know from his letters, or a stranger. You go over to his house and he comes to the door and you look at each other for a moment. Then he invites you to come in and takes you up to see his science fiction and fantasy collection. You go into his room, and it's like being at home again, because there are the same stacks of magazines in the corner and illustrations on the wall. It's a fan's room. You don't have to bother getting acquainted because you already know each other. It's a wonderful feeling.

Fans will travel almost any distance to get together with other fans. You should witness a World Science Fiction Convention. Every fan who can possibly make it starts out for the Convention City. The 1950 get-together was held in Portland, Oregon, over the Labor Day weekend, and fans came to it from all parts of the country. A lot of them drove out from the East, picking up other fans on the way.

Many fanzine editors were present, talking over the future of their magazines and saying hello to old friends and new ones. Some of the professional writers and editors were there also, and fans found themselves rubbing shoulders and chatting with their favorite authors.

Perhaps the high point at any Convention is the auction. Every year the publishing houses donate original cover paintings and interior artwork from their magazines to be auctioned

off to the highest bidders. It's a very good way for fans to increase their collections, because they can obtain really top work that they couldn't otherwise get. Lots of times also a fan who is breaking up his own collection will offer it for auction. By the time a Convention is over, you'll see dozens of tired-looking fans starting homeward, clutching their precious covers and new books and maybe an old first edition that somebody had sold.

NEXT summer the Ninth World Science Fiction Convention will be held in New Orleans. All of fandom is looking forward to being there. It should be one of the best yet.

It's really amazing how much time and effort fans put into fandom. They collect science fiction and fantasy magazines, books, and artwork. Some of them have huge collections. I thought I had seen some big ones, but not long ago I saw what is perhaps the ultimate in magazine collecting. I was in Cincinnati and went over to meet Darrell Richardson. I knew he was one of fandom's leading collectors, but I wasn't prepared for what he actually has. Throughout his house, piled shelf on shelf, is every issue of every science fiction and fantasy magazine ever published. He also has files of other magazines that aren't in the fantasy field but that sometimes print science fiction stories. And he has Canadian and English and foreign language editions as well.

Many of his magazines and books are extremely rare. Quite a few of them are pre-1900. He has complete files of Edgar Rice Burroughs — every edition of every story he wrote. I saw Portuguese Tarzans, Czechoslovakian Tarzans, even Chinese Tar-

zana. Richardson also owns the complete works of Frederick Faust, better known to the general reader as Max Brand. As far as I know, this is the only complete Faust collection in existence.

Darrell Richardson edits a fanzine called THE FABULOUS FAUST FANZINE which no Faust fan should be without. It's an exceptionally well done publication, containing material either by or about Faust. The current issue, number 3, contains five stories, three of them under the Max Brand name, one under Faust, and one under Nicholas Silver. The story "Humming Birds and Honeysuckle" has never before been published in this version, although another version once appeared in ESQUIRE. The issue also contains a number of Faust's poems. But perhaps the best feature in it is Faust's own autobiographical "A Sketch of My Life," a vividly touching account of the author's early life and hardships.

If any of you Faust readers would

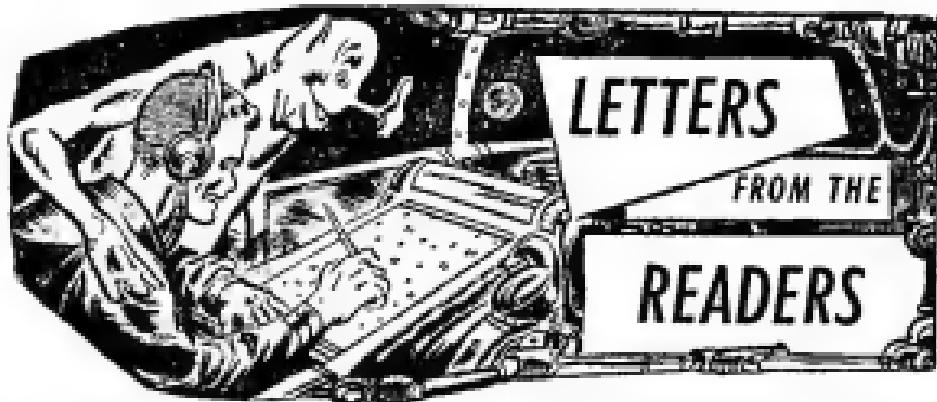
like a copy of this fanzine, send fifty cents to THE FABULOUS FAUST FANZINE, 6 Silver Ave., South Fort Mitchell, Covington, Kentucky. Darrell C. Richardson, Editor. You'll be glad you did.

As I said at the beginning of this column, this department is to be a review of fandom and its activities. There are a lot of really good fanzines I know you would be interested in, and I want to tell you about all of them. So all of you fan editors who have a fanzine you'd like reviewed in this department, just mail me a copy and I'll write it up and give it a good send-off. Send it to PANDORA'S BOX, c/o IMAGINATION, P.O. Box 280, Evanston, Illinois.

And before somebody beats me to it I'd like to say that if you open up PANDORA'S BOX you won't find "The Thing." I had to evict it. Non payment of rent. After all, what can I buy with Martian balls?

See you next issue!

* * *



Dear Editor:

I've never before written to an editor nor any magazine, but I felt that this time I just had to.

I read most of the science-fiction

magazines, but in all my three years of reading I have never read two stories that I liked better than Hal Annas' "Maid—To Order" or Charles P. Myers' "Vengeance of Toffee" in

the February issue of **IMAGINATION**.

I have never in all my life laughed as much as when I was reading these two stories. "Toffee" is a delightful character, and I certainly urge Mr. Myers to write more about her. Hal Annas too has a great talent for entertaining. More power to both of them!

Julia Gravenhorst
156 East 21st St.
Brooklyn, N.Y.

*We're always pleased—and proud—to receive a "first" letter from a reader. When we were editing **FANTASTIC ADVENTURES** we used to say: "Welcome into the fold!" Well, we say the same thing now with our own magazine, only more so. As to "Toffee," Charlie Myers informs us that we can expect a new "Toffee" yarn any day now. Rest assured that as soon as we get it the story will be scheduled for the next possible issue.*

*As to Hal Annas, we're very glad you like his style. He's just one more discovery in the writing field that we're proud to present to you. And while we're talking about Hal, we'd like to know from you—and the rest of the readers—how you liked his story in this issue. **THE LONG-SNOZZLE EVENT** features Len Zitta, Galactic Shamus of the future. He could very well turn out to be a series character, much like "Toffee" has. But your response will determine that. If you like Len Zitta and his hilarious crime deduction techniques, by all means let us know. We'll see that Hal Annas keeps writing them. Fair enough? . . . with*

AN EDITOR APPROVES

Dear Bill:

You may not know it, but enclosed in this letter is a screen of

sheer delight. The February issue of **IMAGINATION** came in this morning, and since its arrival I've been reading it avidly. I read the Ted Sturgeon story, **SHADOW, SHADOW ON THE WALL . . .** and the Hal Annas yarn, **MAID—TO ORDER!** right away. And I've started reading the new "Toffee" story. However, I just couldn't refrain from dropping you a note before reading further.

"Madge" is a beautiful little magazine, Bill—I'm delighted with it. And considering that you faced a fire at your printing plant and a railroad strike at shipping time, I'd say that you came through with flying colors.

Oh, yes, Ted Sturgeon just called me and he tells me that he's got a TV tieup for **SHADOW, SHADOW**. It will be done over CBS fairly soon. That's a fine tribute to a first-rate story.

All the luck in the world.

Lila Shaffer
Managing Editor
Fiction Group
Ziff-Davis Pub. Co.
386 Madison Ave.
New York 17, N.Y.

Your letter makes us more than a little bit nostalgic, Lila. An editor always likes to hear from his readers. But when a friend and former associate takes time out to sit down and write a letter, it really warms the heart.

We won't say thanks for the nice words you had to say about "Madge." That would be too inadequate a means of telling you how much your interest is appreciated.

*But we would like to say here, for the benefit of all our readers, that **FANTASTIC ADVENTURES & AMAZING STORIES** are lucky indeed in having a Managing Editor with the keen editorial insight that*

you have. And we don't mean that idly. In all the years we worked together you showed time and time again that you've got that rare quality that any successful editor must have—being able to pick a darn good story. We're glad you think we can still pick them. And we hope you'll continue to read future issues. All the best to you and the gang at Z-D . . . with

COMMENTS SUPERFLUOUS

Dear Bill:

Congratulations on the first issue of "Madge" under your guidance.

I received my copy of the February issue today and I stopped work in the middle of a story to read everything in it. Further comment would be superfluous.

I'm sure the magazine will prove very popular in this—and succeeding years.

Hal Annas
Suffolk, Va.

Thanks for the letter, Hal. And we're sure, from the popular response to your stories already, that you'll be right there on the contents page helping make "Madge" the excellent magazine all of our readers have come to expect. Now get back to work on that story—and send it in pronto! . . . with

MORE DESIGN

Dear Ed:

In the first two issues of Madge suggestions for improvement were requested. I have a few points that I feel are worth consideration.

Compare the department headings in the first issue with those of the second, including the contents page. Those little spots seem to cheapen the magazine. I have some small knowledge of design, and I feel that the first issue was superior from that

aspect. Of course, I would like to see even better design in the future. Along these lines, the illos seem to suffer. The layouts are nice and in some cases the drawings themselves are pretty fair—such as Bok. But your artists could give far more attention to expressing their work more adequately. One thing I would like to see is a few illos playing up design rather than repeating some incident in the story. For design I think of Bok and Calle. The same of course holds true for the department headings. The present illos on the departments are more pulpy. Drop them or try to get more design element into them. Perhaps something on the abstract side, such as Paul Calle does. But abstract, or modern, as you may call it, design is what is needed to pep Madge up.

Perhaps I am being too harsh, for your artists do have to work under no small number of limitations. But I want to see Madge assume leadership in its field, and I feel that practicing original approaches is one step toward this goal.

Jack Gaughan
417 N. Jackson St.
Springfield, Ohio

Your suggestions are interesting, Jack. We'd like to ask other readers to comment. Just what sort of artwork should *IMAGINATION* feature? And as to original approaches, what about the cover on this issue? The points about design that you raise are certainly worth discussing. We'd like to get a lot of viewpoints on this subject. And don't forget—all of you fans—get your letters in promptly for the reader's section. And remember the address: *IMAGINATION*, P.O. Box 239, Evanston, Ill. . . . See you next issue, the first week in May . . . with .

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